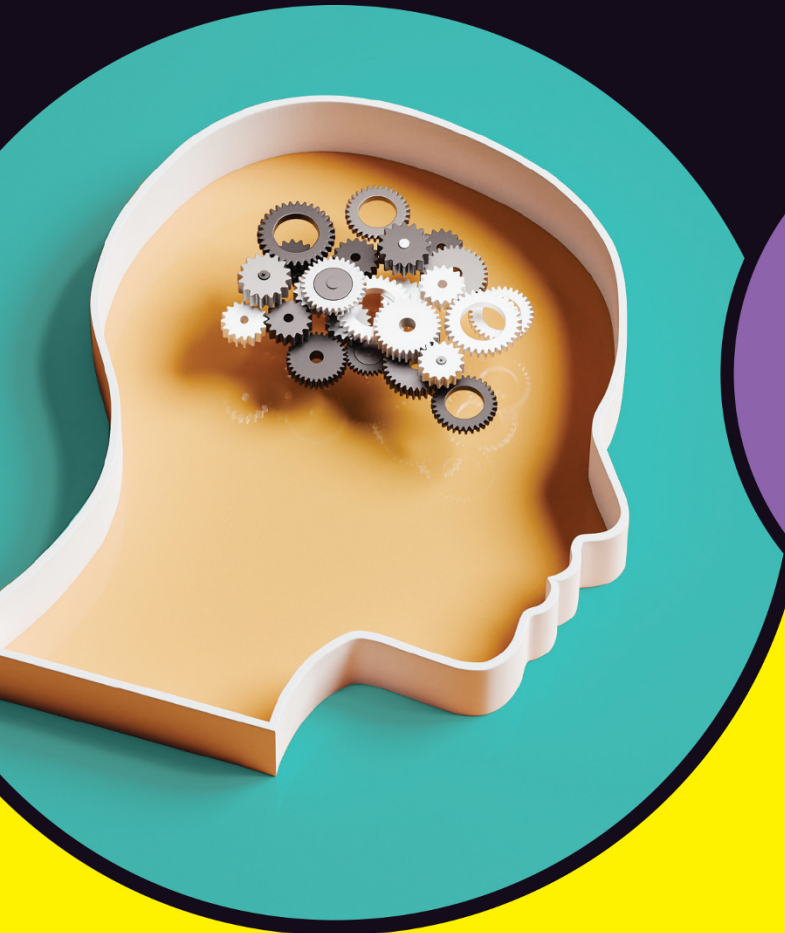4th Edition

Neuro-linguistic Programming

For dummies®

A **Wiley** Brand

Control how you think, feel, and behave

Communicate clearly and effectively to build rapport

Design goals that turn vision into results

Romilla Ready
Breakthrough Coach, trainer, and author

Kate Burton
International coach and author

Neuro-linguistic Programming

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4th Edition

by Romilla Ready and Kate Burton

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Contents at a Glance

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Introduction

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies*, which is packed with ideas and tips to increase your success and happiness. Most likely, you're reading this book because you've heard neuro-linguistic programming (NLP throughout this book) mentioned as you go about your daily life — in companies, colleges, and coffee shops. We wrote the original version of this book because our experience of NLP transformed our own lives. We wanted to ignite the spark of curiosity in others about what's possible with NLP. We also believed that the time had come for NLP to move away from academic- and business-speak to real-life plain English to be used by all people who want to make improvements in their lives.

In recent years, we've witnessed NLP growing ever more popular. Part of this popularity is because NLP offers enlightening "aha!" moments, and part is because it simply makes sense. As we celebrate 50 years of NLP, one of the true contributions of NLP has been to show people that they have choices: They can manage their emotional states, and they can make changes to their lives. It has also demystified the notion (and limitations) of innate talent by demonstrating that you can study excellence in any field. Yet the term NLP can be off-putting and the associated jargon may present a barrier to non-NLP professionals. So a little explanation is required:

>> **Neuro** relates to what's happening in your mind.

>> **Linguistic** refers not only to the words you use in your communication but also your body language and how you use it.

>> **Programming** tackles the persistent patterns of behavior, both effective and ineffective, that you learn and then repeat.

Some people describe NLP as "the study of the structure of subjective experience"; others call it "the art and science of communication." We prefer to say that NLP enables you to understand what makes you tick: how you think, how you feel, and how you make sense of everyday life in the world around you. Armed with this understanding, your whole life — work and play — can be renewed.

It's hard to believe that the first edition of this book was published in 2004, more than two decades ago. Over this period, *Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies* has presented us with amazing opportunities, primarily in the form of clients who've shared their lives, problems, and successes with us. We've had the chance

to develop these ideas into a range of workshops and coaching programs for different audiences. In this fresh edition, we incorporate some lessons from our more recent work and life experiences as well as from the other books we've written in the *For Dummies* series on coaching, confidence, and career change. In particular, some of the biggest developments that we refer to in this updated edition are in the field of neuroscience, where technology such as brain imaging is constantly increasing knowledge and possibilities. The magic of NLP is joining with the rigor of neuroscience. Thanks to social media and the digital world, the way people connect and communicate has also changed dramatically in recent years, which makes understanding how to build rapport and manage relationships even more important. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged more people to connect with friends and family online when travel and physical meetings weren't possible. As the global world in which we live evolves, we hope you find more new ideas here to help you mitigate the negative effects of stress and have fun experimenting with and applying the tools in the NLP toolkit.

About This Book

This book aims to entrance anyone fascinated by people. Through its experiential approach, NLP encourages people to take action to shape their own lives. It attracts those willing to "have a go" and open their minds to new possibilities.

We try to make NLP friendly, pragmatic, accessible, and useful for you. We expect you to be able to dip into the book at any chapter and quickly find practical ideas on how to use NLP to resolve issues or make changes for yourself.

In displaying the NLP "market stall," our choice of content is selective. We aim to offer an enticing menu if you're a newcomer. And for those with more knowledge, we hope this book helps you to digest what you already know as well as treating you to some new ideas and applications. To that end, we make finding information such as the following easy for you:

>> How to discover what's important to you so that you can pursue your goals with energy and conviction.

>> What the main NLP presuppositions are and why they're important to you.

>> What the best ways are to understand other people's style, helping you to get your own message heard.

>> When to build rapport and when to break it.

>> How to get your unconscious mind to work together with your conscious mind to make a strong team.

In addition, because the best way to discover NLP is to experience it, take full opportunity of playing with all the exercises we provide. Some of the ideas and exercises in this book may be quite different from your normal style of behavior, but don't be put off. The NLP approach is about setting aside your disbelief, giving it a go, and realizing your potential.

It's always easier to grasp a subject when you have a familiar "hook" to anchor it on to. We suggest you choose a theme or situation — perhaps training, coaching, a difficult manager, or stress — and keep that in mind as you work through the book, applying NLP principles to your chosen example.

Foolish Assumptions

In this book, we make a few assumptions about you. We assume that you're a human being who wants to be happy. You're probably interested in learning and ideas. You may have heard the term *NLP* mentioned, you may already work with the concepts or perhaps it's just a new and intriguing subject for you. You need no prior knowledge of NLP, but this book is for you if any of the following situations ring a bell:

» You're tired or fed up with the way some things are for you now.

» You're interested in how to take your living experience to new levels of achievement, happiness, adventure, and success.

» You're curious about how you can influence others ethically and easily.

» You're somebody who loves learning and growing.

» You're ready to turn your dreams into reality.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons in this book help you to find particular kinds of information that may be of use to you.

This icon highlights NLP terminology that may sound like a foreign language, but which has a precise meaning in the NLP field.

This icon suggests ideas and activities to give you practice in NLP techniques and food for thought.

TRY THIS

This icon contains practical advice to put NLP to work for you.

TIP

This icon is a friendly reminder of important points to note.

REMEMBER

This icon indicates real-life experiences of NLP in action. Some are real, some people have had their names changed, and others are composite characters.

ANECDOTE

This icon marks things to avoid in your enthusiasm to try out NLP skills on your own.

WARNING

Beyond the Book

In addition to the printed book or e-book you're reading now, you can also benefit from reading some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Check out the free Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com` for a simple summary of the key points contained within this book. To find the Cheat Sheet for this book, just type **Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies Cheat** Sheet in the Search bar on the home page. You can print out this really handy sheet to carry with you throughout the day, so you can dip into it for some NLP any time you need to.

Where to Go From Here

You don't have to read this book from cover to cover, but you benefit greatly if you capture everything at the pace and in the order that's right for you. Use the table of contents to see what grabs your interest. For example, if you're keen to understand someone else, first try Chapter 6. Or if you want to know what makes you tick, turn to Chapter 5 and discover the power of your senses. Feel free to dip and dive in. Have fun on the journey.

1

Getting Started with NLP

Get an overview of NLP and what it's about.

Discover the power of your unconscious mind and understand how your beliefs can impact your reality.

Find out how to create the future you want for yourself.

Chapter **1**

Getting to Know Neuro-linguistic Programming

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 appetizing?"

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 behavior 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 centers on communication and change. NLP teaches about sensory awareness (more about this in Chapter 5), which, put simply, is paying attention to the cues people display when they communicate with you, such as a raised eyebrow, a sudden pause, or a change in voice tone. Communication isn't just about what you say; it's also about how others respond. By noticing those responses, you can adapt in the moment and build stronger connections. You also become more aware of your own habits and responses, which means you can focus on what helps you succeed and let go of what holds you back. In today's climate of rapid change, flexibility is essential. It gives you more choices in how you respond to people and situations, which in turn enables you to exert greater influence over the outcomes you create (see Chapter 2 for more on presuppositions and flexibility).

So welcome to the start of the journey. We start by giving you a quick taster of the key NLP themes in this chapter.

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 behavior.

>> **Linguistic** refers to the way you use language to make sense of the world, capture, and conceptualize 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 organize your internal programming so that you can get the outcomes you want.

TRY THIS

To see this process in action, begin to notice how you think. Imagine a hot summer day. You're standing in your kitchen and 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.

REMEMBER

Words have the power to trigger your salivary 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 of "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 organizational 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.

Thus, NLP 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. Bandler and Grinder's work was happening at the time as their computer science contemporaries Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were setting up Apple Inc., so programming concepts were gaining people's awareness.

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, Grinder initiated some new models known as New Code (documented in his book *Whispering in the Wind* [J&C Enterprises, 2001]) and he continues this work today with his partner Carmen Bostic St. Clair.

Since those early days 50 years ago, the field of NLP has exploded to encompass many disciplines in many countries around the world. New great teachers and practitioners in NLP are still emerging today to build on the work of the founders. Established teachers are collaborating with colleagues in other disciplines, such as neuroscience, education, and medicine to further the application of their work.

So what's next for NLP? The discipline has certainly traveled 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. Some of the early pioneers of NLP, such as Robert Dilts, are now celebrating 50 years of working to transform the lives of with thousands of people worldwide. 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, therapists, 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 shared across social media platforms and apps such as LinkedIn, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook — channels that were unheard of in the 1970s and are constantly evolving. The explosion of artificial intelligence (AI) will no doubt bring change to NLP that we cannot yet envisage.

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. Collaboration is key to generating new ideas and applications. Given that 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 and evidence

You may hear the words pseudoscience, integrity, and manipulation associated with NLP, and so we want to put the record straight now. NLP has never purported to be a scientific discipline. Human change is a highly subjective area that depends on many fluctuating variables, from the state of the person to the skill of the practitioner that they work with. Many practitioners have reported success using NLP techniques to help individuals overcome challenges, including trauma. Clients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have found NLP interventions extremely helpful. The proof of NLP in education, health, and industry programs lies in the lasting change it creates for the client, working as it does from the inside thinking to the outward behavior.

NLP offers tools and techniques, which, like hammers and chisels, can be used for good or ill. The way that the overwhelming majority of practitioners and coaches use NLP is in service of their clients to achieve positive outcomes. 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? Are you using NLP for good or just for personal gain?

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 organizations, you're on track for success. And always bear in mind that what goes around comes around!

TIP Professional bodies such as the Association for Neuro-linguistic Programming (ANLP) work tirelessly to set and uphold international standards and undertake due diligence on the qualifications of their members. Always check out the training and bona fide qualifications for any professional for any organization that you engage with.

Encountering the Pillars of NLP: Straight Up and Straightforward

NLP 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 colors, sounds, and smells are subtly different from yours? Or that a colleague looks worried when he talks about his job. Maybe you notice the color 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 to set you up for the future — whether those decisions are about what you're going to do on the weekend, how you're going to run an important project at work, or in discovering the true purpose of your life. Head to Chapter 4 for tools that will enable you to get the results you deserve.

» **Behavioral flexibility:** This term means discovering how to do something different when what you're currently doing isn't working. Being flexible is key to practicing 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 maximize your own flexibility can be found throughout the book.
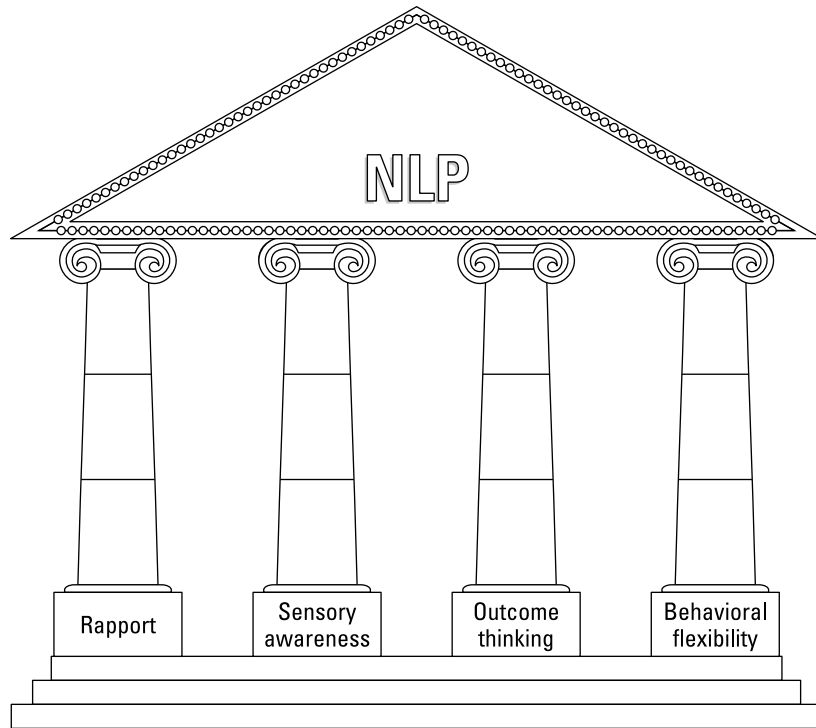
FIGURE 1-1:
The four pillars of NLP.

Here's an example of what these four pillars may mean to you in an everyday event. Suppose 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 behavior* and consider different options if you don't achieve what you want the first time.

Discovering Models and Modeling

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 modeling 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 favorite 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 bit 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 neighbors construct regarding how life operates will be very different to your own. NLP encourages collaboration between diverse groups of people to generate new thinking. You'll experience the power and possibilities of many different perspectives at any live NLP training program or conference with a broad mix of delegates.

REMEMBER

NLP doesn't change the world — it simply helps you change the way that you observe, perceive, and react to both the world around you and the inner workings of your own mind. NLP allows you to create a clearer, more detailed map of your internal experience — helping you understand the *how* and *why* behind your thoughts and behaviors so you can become more effective at what you want to

achieve. It gives you an understanding of patterns of behavior 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.

ANECDOTE

John, an architect, rents expensive office space in a city center. 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 things up. He frequently worked late and was grumpy if interrupted, so the cleaners came and went without daring to disturb him.

Through coaching, John came to recognize 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.

Modeling excellence

Modeling excellence is a theme much discussed in this book because so much of NLP is future focused 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 modeling other people, you can break your discovering into its component parts. This perspective is empowering, and it's 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. More of this in Chapter 19.

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." To benefit from NLP, you need to be open to

questioning and challenging your norms, as well as allowing others to question and challenge you about your beliefs and patterns of thinking and behavior. Being challenged on your beliefs and patterns can feel uncomfortable, but you have a choice for how you handle it: Set your ego aside, reflect on what's being offered, and choose to adapt or dismiss it. 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 (although being curious about problems and obstacles is part of the learning journey). 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, then consider changing it. Changing your mindset 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 realize consciously.

Changing is up to you

Gone are the days when you needed to stay stuck in a downward spiral of repetitive behaviors 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. It's about trying things out — giving things 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 post-pandemic world, marked by uncertainty, is creating growing mental health challenges, many people — from children to adults — are struggling to cope. But within every challenge lies an opportunity. In these pages, we share how NLP tools and techniques can help you not only manage your own stress but also support others in navigating theirs. The aim is to transform stress into a catalyst for growth, resilience, and connection — and to move toward greater hope, community, and love.

REMEMBER

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 journalist 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.

Chapter **2**

Identifying Some Basic NLP Assumptions

Belinda has a much-loved only daughter, Jasmine. Belinda and her husband indulged Jasmine because she was born after they'd given up hope of ever having a child. Consequently, Jasmine was a little spoiled, and unfortunately, she was prone to throwing tantrums, thrashing about on the floor, screaming, and flailing her arms and legs.

Belinda made no progress with Jasmine's tantrums until one day she decided to join her. Belinda took two saucepans out of the cupboard and started banging them on the floor; she kicked and screamed even better and louder than Jasmine. Guess what? Jasmine lay still in stunned astonishment, staring at her mother. She decided there and then that her mother was the more expert "tantrummer" and that she'd lose the tantrum contest every time. She realized that pursuing this particular course of action was futile, and the tantrums duly stopped. Belinda took control of her interaction with Jasmine by displaying the greater flexibility of behavior.

This little anecdote illustrates that the person with the most flexibility in a system can influence the system. This statement isn't the result of some experiment conducted in a laboratory. Instead, it's an NLP *presupposition* (or assumption), which, if practiced and adopted, can help to ease your journey through life. Belinda's story illustrates just one of several presuppositions — also called convenient beliefs — which form the basis of NLP.

This presupposition is known as the *Law of Requisite Variety* and derives from systems theory. This law was formulated by Ross Ashby, an English psychiatrist who was also a pioneer in the field of cybernetics. Put very simply, the Law of Requisite Variety means the ability of a person within a system to succeed is directly proportional to the level of flexibility of behavior that person chooses to exhibit.

In the context of communication, if someone doesn't understand what you're trying to communicate, show flexibility and creativity and change how you say it until you're understood. Just raising the decibels while using the same words isn't a strategy we recommend.

Introducing NLP Presuppositions

NLP presuppositions are no more than generalizations about the world that can prove useful to you when you act as if they're true. In the following sections, we describe some of the presuppositions that we consider to be most influential out of several that the founders of NLP developed.

The map is not the territory

One of the first presuppositions is that "the map is not the territory." This statement was published in *Science and Sanity* in 1933 by Korzybski, a Polish count and mathematician. Korzybski was referring to the fact that you experience the world through your senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) — the territory. You then take this external phenomenon, pass it through your mental filters (Chapter 3 tells you more) such as your values, beliefs, and life experiences and make an internal representation (IR) of it within your brain — the map.

This internal map that you create of the external world, shaped by your experiences, is never an exact replica of the map made by someone else perceiving the same surroundings as you. In other words, what's outside can never be the same as what's inside your brain or the brain of another person.

Take the following analogy. If you ask a botanist what *belladonna* means, they may give you the Latin name for the plant and describe the flowers and slight scent while making a picture of the plant in their head. A homoeopath, in contrast, may explain its uses in treating certain symptoms and see a picture of a patient they treated. If you ask a murder-mystery writer about belladonna, they may say that it's a poison.

Remember a trip on which you really enjoyed the food and decided one dish in particular was your favorite. On returning home, you may decide to recreate the

experience by visiting a restaurant that you know serves the dish you loved. You're filled with anticipation as you read through the menu choices, and they evoke the images, sounds, smells, and feelings from your trip. You order what you decide was your favorite meal; you see the waiter heading toward your table; you begin salivating; the plate is placed in front of you and . . . the presentation is all "wrong." It doesn't look or smell how you remember it. The meal you're looking at just doesn't match the "map" you had in your mind!

REMEMBER

The point the examples illustrate is that, depending on the context and someone's background, different people create different IRs of the same thing.

Putting perceptions through your own personal filter

Your senses bombard you with millions of different bits of information every second, and yet your conscious mind can deal with only a handful of individual pieces at any given moment. As a result, an awful lot of information is filtered out. This filtration process is influenced by your values and beliefs, memories, decisions, experiences, and cultural and social background; it allows in only what your filters are tuned to receive.

TRY THIS

When you're with another person or other people, choose something in your surroundings and have each person describe their observations — the view from a window, for example. Notice that people's descriptions are individually tailored by their own life experiences.

Some Europeans and North Americans experience a major culture shock when visiting countries such as India or Mexico. Because of their cultural background, they may be deeply disturbed by the level of poverty in some areas, whereas local people accept the poverty as part of life. People accept the familiarity of their own landscape.

Traveling down another person's map: Unfamiliar territory

The result of this personal filter is that everyone has a very individual map of the world. To make communication easier, a really useful exercise is to at least attempt to understand the IR or map of the person with whom you're communicating.

ANECDOTE

Romilla was buying some fish and chips for supper and was asked to complete a short form about the quality, service, and value-for-money of the food. The women serving behind the counter were upset because a man who'd been in earlier in the evening had declined, quite rudely, to fill in the form. Romilla asked the women whether they'd considered how the poor man may have felt if he was illiterate and suggested that perhaps he was rude because he was embarrassed.

The change in the perception of the two women was phenomenal: "I never even thought about that," said one. Their attitude immediately changed from anger and resentment to sympathy. They also felt much better in themselves and were able to let go of the negative feelings they'd been holding on to for the last few hours.

The following short exercise helps you to be tolerant, or at least to gain some understanding, when you find yourself in a situation in which another person's response or behavior surprises, irritates, or puzzles you:

1. **Count all the blessings in your life.**

2. **With your focus on your good fortune, be generous.**

3. **Ask yourself what may be going on in this other person's world that would warrant the behavior.**

4. **Rather than holding on to negative feelings, mentally send the person warmth and goodwill and let the feelings go**.

When you begin to master this process, you may find that not only are you happier with your situation but you also accept people and their idiosyncrasies with greater ease.

People respond according to their map of the world

Like all humans, you respond in accordance with the map of the world you hold in your head. This map is based on what you believe about your identity and on your values and beliefs, as well as your attitudes, memories, and cultural background.

Sometimes, the map of the world from which one person operates may not make sense to you. However, a little understanding and tolerance can help to enrich your life.

When Dr. Diwan was a junior doctor, she used to visit a psychiatric hospital. One of the patients was a very well-spoken, highly educated professor of English. One of the professor's little foibles was to walk around at night with an open umbrella. He was convinced that the rays of the moon would give him "moon madness." However, the professor took great delight in sharing his passion for English literature with members of staff, whose lives were certainly enriched by their daily interactions with him.

If the staff had been intolerant of the "mad professor" and ignored or sidelined him, unbeknownst to them, their lives would have been impoverished without the richness of his literary stories and his sense of humor — he often referred to himself as the "impatient patient."

This is a particularly powerful presupposition when applied to coaching. As a coach, you must monitor your own behavior vigilantly to ensure you don't try to influence the direction of a session so the results fit your own values and beliefs or, indeed, your skill set. American psychologist Abraham Maslow is reported to have said that if your only tool is a hammer, you treat everything as if it were a nail. You may have a favorite model when you're coaching; for example, you always take your clients through a certain sequence of steps. If one day you find yourself working with someone who doesn't suit that pattern of thinking or work-ing, you won't be as effective in helping them create the change they need.

Following Jack's promotion to a management position, he realized that he was struggling to cope with all the demands being placed on him and decided to employ the services of a coach. Daniela was recommended to him and came armed with a list of processes for Jack to follow. In trying to do what Daniela suggested, Jack found himself having to deal with another layer of to-dos, which then made him feel even more stressed. Jack went on to work with Christina, who employed a more person-centered approach. Instead of asking Jack to follow a fixed process, Christina held a safe, respectful space where Jack could explore his experience, feelings, and choices without judgment. Jack made real strides as he uncovered emotional baggage that had been holding him back and accessed his innate capac-ity to heal. He realized he could draw on his own internal processes — ones that felt more natural, authentic, and better suited to his personality to meet the demands of his new professional role.

There is no failure, only feedback

This presupposition is a very powerful one by which to live your life. Everyone makes mistakes and experiences setbacks. You have a choice between allowing yourself to be waylaid by your undesirable results or taking on board the lessons that present themselves, dusting yourself off, and having another shot at jumping the hurdle.

A CHILD'S MAP OF THE WORLD

A child's map of the world can sometimes make an adult think again! This truth is neatly illustrated by the following delightful snippet.

A police officer was sitting in his police van with his canine partner when he noticed a little boy staring in at them. The boy asked if that was a dog in the van. The police officer confirmed that the other occupant of the van was indeed a dog. The little boy was extremely puzzled and asked, "What's he done to get arrested?"

Part of the reason so many people fear failure is that most have been taught to see it as a verdict — a sign that they're not good enough, not capable, and not cut out for success. But failure isn't a final destination; it's feedback. It's data. It's a messy, uncomfortable teacher that offers priceless lessons if you're willing to stay curious rather than ashamed. The first step in overcoming this fear is shifting your mindset from *What if I fail?* to *What will I learn if I do?* When you start seeing failure as a steppingstone instead of a stop sign, you give yourself permission to try — and that's where real growth begins.

Romilla attended a course run by a wonderful teacher of Hawaiian mysticism, Serge Kahili King, during which he said that he never made mistakes. This statement caused a few chuckles because none of the delegates believed him, and the twinkle in his eyes belied his deadpan facial expression. He then added that he may not always get the results he wants, but he never makes mistakes.

Using the example of Sue, in the previous anecdote about Jack, you may think that she'd failed as a coach. However, working with Jack could be more about feedback if Sue has the self-awareness to realize she didn't help Jack to achieve the results he wanted. She then has a choice. She can either expand her skill set or adapt her interview process to make sure the clients she accepts fit her coaching model.

ANECDOTE

One of the messages we took away from listening to entrepreneur and top marketeer Liz Jackson, MBE, at an International Women's Day event is not to be afraid of failure. Liz has had to adapt to the challenge of losing her eyesight and still manages to run a successful company and be an inspirational professional speaker. She says that failure is one of the most powerful tools for learning. She inspires those around her to break down their barriers to success by talking about what their ambitions look like and stepping out of their comfort zones, even if doing so means being petrified for a while. She says, "It's only the failures that teach you."

TECHNICAL STUFF

In normal language, the term *feedback* is associated with receiving input or getting a response from another person. The meaning of *feedback* has been expanded in the context of this NLP presupposition, however, to include the result or outcome you may derive from a particular situation.

You can discover a lot about feedback from Thomas Edison. Although he's most famous for inventing the light bulb, he was a prolific inventor. His genius lay in trying out his ideas, learning from unexpected results and recycling concepts from an experiment that didn't work in other inventions. Where other people saw Edison's thousands of attempts at inventing the light bulb as failures, Edison simply saw each trial as yet another way of discovering how not to make a light bulb.

REMEMBER

Worrying about so-called failure keeps you focused on the negative aspects of past experiences. If, instead, you focus on feedback and examine the results that you've already obtained, even if they're unwanted, you discover new possibilities and can move forward.

TRY THIS

When you're faced with "failure," you can use this NLP presupposition to find the opportunities for growth by asking yourself some questions.

Think of something you "failed" at and ask yourself:

» What am I aiming to achieve?

» What have I achieved so far?

» What feedback have I had?

» What lessons have I learned?

» How can I put the lessons to positive use?

» How am I going to measure my success?

Then pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and have another go!

Bear in mind, however, that people evolve and change and sometimes what you may have wanted to do may not fit in with who you are now. You may realize that you can have more impact managing and directing a project rather than spending hours doing something that you enjoy, for example programming or testing processes, but which isn't giving you the results you want, as quickly as you want. If you decide to change your focus or direction after re-examining your values, reassessing your goals (see Chapter 4 on how to set realizable goals), and weighing all the pros and cons, that is not failure; rather, it's you responding with conscious awareness to feedback that you've received.

The meaning of communication is the response it elicits

No matter how honorable the intentions of your communications, the success of the interaction depends on how the listener receives the message and not on what you intend. In other words, the response that your words elicit is the meaning of your communication.

This presupposition is another very powerful assumption about communication: It places the responsibility for getting your message across squarely at your own door, as the communicator. When you adopt this presupposition, you can no

longer blame the other person for any misunderstandings. If the response you get isn't what you expected, then, as a student of NLP, you have the tools to use your senses to realize that the other person is missing the point. You also have the flexibility to do things differently, through your behavior and your words.

Just as it's your responsibility to make sure your message is understood, you also need to ask for clarification if you're not clear about what's being communicated to you. People are often reluctant to ask for clarity because they're afraid to be seen as stupid and, therefore, found lacking. Unfortunately, misunderstanding what's being said and acting on that misunderstanding is ultimately more costly. People who are confident about their subject and in themselves are those most comfortable asking incisive questions.

But let's not ignore where that fear comes from. Many people have been ridiculed in the past for asking "stupid questions" — often by those who used sarcasm or put-downs to mask their own insecurities. When someone mocks another for asking a genuine question, it says far more about *their* low self-esteem and mean-spiritedness than it does about the questioner. A culture that shuts down curiosity breeds confusion and small thinking. Asking questions is not a weakness — it's a sign of engagement, humility, and courage.

REMEMBER

Start with the required end in mind and think of what outcome you want from your communication. What would happen if a builder started by slapping bricks on top of one another without a plan? You certainly wouldn't get your cathedral! To build something with strong foundations, you need to start with an architect's vision of the end product. This presupposition is also useful for keeping your emotions out of the way when you're involved in a situation that may become difficult.

In Chapter 8, we discuss more ways of practicing flexibility of behavior and give a few more tips on dealing with emotions when the going gets tough. If you want to find out more about sensory awareness, take a look at Chapter 5.

If what you're doing isn't working, do something different

This presupposition is so simple, yet people don't always modify their behavior when things don't go as they want. They carry on doing the same thing in the hope that something will change. Changing your own behavior is harder than keeping on hoping and wishing other people will change. However, changing things about yourself gives you greater control and satisfaction. Trying to change someone else is often a disappointing experience!

Not everyone has your resources; the very fact that you're reading this book means that you're showing initiative in making changes in your life. We suggest that changing yourself involves the expenditure of a lot less energy than does struggling to make other people conform to your ideals.

If you accept this NLP presupposition, you recognize that changing tactics is better than continuing to beat your head against the proverbial brick wall or spending your time and energy complaining about someone else and making yourself feel bad about someone over whom you may have very little control. Still, before you can actually change your tactics or do something different, you need to understand more about your present situation.

Why is what you're doing not working? Didn't you communicate exactly what you want? Perhaps the other person hasn't discovered the necessary resources to help you achieve your outcome. What can you do differently to get the desired results?

What you focus on and how you give meaning to an experience affects your mood and influences your ability to create the results you want in your life. Just as you can choose to change how you communicate, you can choose what you focus on and how you allow it to affect you. For instance, if you feel shut out by your partner, you have a choice. You can wind yourself up with negative self-talk and sulk. Or you can, at an appropriate moment, explain how you feel and ask your partner what's creating the barrier and how you can help.

Positive feedback works brilliantly, and so when your partner does show moments of being open, listen, respond appropriately, and make sure that you express your appreciation for being included in their life.

Kamiko was a student who learned best through feeling and touch. This tendency meant that she had difficulty in following standard lecture-style lessons, which are more suited to people who like to see a screen and hear a teacher talk. As a result, Kamiko was having difficulty staying on top of her classwork and wasn't reaching her potential.

A less-talented teacher may have placed the blame on Kamiko and branded her as stupid or as having a bad attitude to her studies. Fortunately, her teacher, Jill, recognized that Kamiko needed to be shown how to study and how to apply the lessons in a more practical way. Kamiko was lucky that Jill understood the reason for her problems and assumed responsibility for doing something different by adjusting her teaching methods to help Kamiko do well. Patricia was lucky that Jill was a skilled educator: she was flexible and took responsibility for the effectiveness of her teaching. Instead of blaming Kamiko for her inability to learn, Jill found another way to reach her.

YOUR LEAD OR PRIMARY REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

You experience your world through your five senses — visual (eyes), auditory (ears), tactile (touch), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). At times, particularly when you're stressed, you may use one sense in preference to the others to collect data about your world. This system is called your *lead* or *primary representational system*, and it influences how you learn and the way you represent your external world inside your head. We talk more about using the five senses in Chapter 5.

You cannot not communicate

This presupposition is very important because it can help you become aware of the subtle messages that you and other people convey unintentionally. Have you ever had a meeting in which cordial words were exchanged but an underlying tension or resistance clearly existed? You most likely picked up on the body language and voice tonality of the others in the room. That's because, with the best of intentions, it's impossible not to communicate. Even silence conveys a message — tacit permission to continue, a lack of interest, disapproval, and so on. This is shown in a fascinating study by Professor Albert Mehrabian. His research demonstrated that, when talking about feelings and attitudes — particularly when a discrepancy exists between body language and the words being used — what you say has a very small impact compared with the tone you use and how you hold your body (see Chapter 6 for more on Mehrabian's work).

Poker provides a great analogy for this presupposition. A player can win even with a weak hand if they can read the subtle physical and mental clues displayed by the other players. Holding the breath or having a facial tic is an example of a physical "tell." This signal can relate to nervousness *or* anticipation, and you can be sure which it is only by watching and calibrating the reactions of the other player. A change in someone's betting pattern can give other players a clue to the player's state of mind and, therefore, the strength of the hand that player is holding.

A *mind read* happens when you assume you know what's being communicated based on your own experience or pattern of behavior. If you see someone frowning when you're speaking, maybe they're focusing on what you're saying. If you associate frowning with annoyance because of past experiences with a parent or teacher, assuming annoyance on the part of the listener can prove to be unproductive. Stopping to ask them why they look annoyed will break their chain of thought and confuse them. Assuming their annoyance may also put you in a defensive frame of mind if you remember how you felt when you were chastised for an infraction.

Don't misunderstand what a person is communicating either verbally or through their body language by mind reading what you think they're implying.

Individuals have all the resources they need to achieve their desired outcomes

We love this presupposition because it's so positive! This phrase means that everyone has the potential to develop and grow. The important point to make here is that you may not have all the resources you need at the moment, but you do have the potential to acquire new internal and external resources.

An *internal resource* can relate to learning how to overcome a behavior that gets in the way of you achieving your goals. For example, negative self-talk such as, "Oh, you are an idiot," when you make a mistake or feel unsure of yourself can reinforce feelings of inadequacy. An *external resource* could be going on a course to learn a new skill or hone an existing one or asking someone to mentor or coach you so that you perform better at work.

Learning how to be more assertive gives you more internal and external resources because it teaches you to manage your mindset as well as your interactions with others.

Darien, an eight-year-old boy, was being bullied at school. He was resourceful enough to ask his father for help in dealing with the bullies. His father told him to behave more assertively and with more confidence. Darien had no idea how to do so.

Darien's hero, however, is Miles Morales, and so his father taught him the *circle of excellence* exercise (which we describe in Chapter 9) and asked Darien to imagine that he was Miles Morales as he stepped into the circle. Darien created a personal anthem for himself, emulating the *Into the Spider-Verse* theme tune — "I'm stepping into my power/Standing tall — not backing down/My fear's still here, but I move through it/I've got the fire. I won't lose/I'm ready for whatever." He would repeat the words out loud, hum them under his breath, or even sing them softly to himself until he'd psyched himself up and felt unstoppable. Darien's newfound confidence affected his behavior, body language, and attitude. As a result, Darien's tormentors faded away and his street cred soared; other little victims were soon begging to discover his technique.

The circle of excellence is a brilliant NLP anchoring technique for psyching yourself up by building a powerful resource state. You can use it before delivering a presentation or when you go to a networking meeting and find yourself hesitating outside a crowded room.

If you want to build rapport faster, make yourself more memorable, and encourage others to lean in, listen, and say yes — personalize your approach. Just like Tom did with his anthem, use all your senses to create a process that's fully aligned with who you are. In networking and business development, that kind of authentic presence is magnetic.

Every behavior has a positive intent

Unfortunately this presupposition also applies in reverse; that is, to bad or non-productive behavior. With bad behavior, the positive intention behind it, called secondary gain, is obscured.

Secondary gain is the benefit someone derives unconsciously from a particular behavior that's normally considered to be disempowering or bad. For example, a child may play the clown in class in order to gain acceptance from their peers, even though teachers and parents find this clowning around irritating when they want the child to be well-behaved. Sadly, the benefit experienced by the person exhibiting the behavior is often to the detriment of the people who have to deal with it.

The youngest of five children, Nadya, had suffered from a bad back for as long as she was able to remember, and doctors found no reason for the pain. Nadya's mother was a flighty, self-centered woman who was more interested in partying than in caring for her family. As a child, Nadya's siblings helped her by carrying her books and making sure that she was taken care of.

The back pain became really bad after Nadya's daughter was born, and so her husband did all the shopping and looking after the baby. The little girl grew up to become "mommy's little helper" and was always at her mother's beck and call. When Nadya finally agreed to see a therapist, she was able to acknowledge that her bad back pain was psychosomatic. She realized that it was her way of getting the love and attention she'd craved from her mother but never received.

Nadya's behavior is a brilliant demonstration of this presupposition, because the secondary gain was having her family running around after her, and enabling her to stay trapped in discomfort, when what she really wanted was to have her craving for love and attention satisfied. When Nadya realized her need, she was also able to recognize that she was already getting huge amounts of love and attention from her husband and daughter. One of the side effects of the therapy was that Janet was able to understand that her mother's behavior was the result of the relationship she had with Nadya's grandmother. Nadya was finally able to take responsibility for her own behavior. Despite some rough times as Nadya's relationship with her mother changed, she was able to distance herself from trying to

fulfill her mother's emotional needs and focus on her own well-being and that of her husband and daughter.

REMEMBER

When you identify the concealed positive intention that's causing a person to behave in a particular unresourceful way and help them get to the heart of what's really going on, you can increase your flexibility and thereby your ability to communicate effectively with that person. You can then support them in changing the unwanted behavior by finding a more constructive way to satisfy that same intention, as long as it aligns with their values. You can at least make the other person aware of why they're exhibiting the behavior, which then gives them a choice: continue as they are and face the associated consequences or do something different and break out of a trap.

ANECDOTE

When one of the authors worked for a multinational company, a sales manager, Patrick, occupied one of the free desks in her corner of the building when he visited. Some of the kinder terms people used for Patrick were obnoxious and inconsiderate. He spread himself out. He sprawled in his chair, which meant it was pushed away from his desk and people in the corner had to squeeze past. He was loud, made demands on everyone around him, and was extremely unpleasant to his assistant.

An office gossip revealed that poor Patrick's behavior was the product of a domineering mother and even more controlling wife. Unfortunately, his need for acceptance, and especially respect, made him behave in ways that gave him results that were exactly the opposite to those he craved. One of the benefits of finding out about Patrick's background was that his colleagues were able to think a little more kindly about him and his presence no longer sent blood pressures soaring. By showing him a degree of acceptance, they were able to satisfy his needs a little and mellow his behavior. Their flexibility of behavior helped mitigate Patrick's impact on their little corner.

People are much more than their behavior

Romilla was watching a television program on speeches given by important historical figures. She was intrigued by Martin Luther King's response to a journalist on how to deal with racists. Dr. King could have been paraphrasing the presupposition that people are more than their behavior when he said something to the effect of, "I'm talking about a type of love that will cause you to love the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed that the person does."

The point is that behaving badly doesn't make someone a bad person. Separating the behavior from the person is really important. People can behave badly out of frustration and feelings of inadequacy when they don't have the resources or ability to behave differently in that instance. Perhaps they find themselves in an

environment that stops them from being the best they can be. Helping people to develop capabilities and skills, or to move to a more conducive environment, can often change their behavior dramatically and propel them to new levels of excellence.

ANECDOTE

Hugo, a very sweet and kind young man, found reading and writing very difficult. However, he adored animals and was extremely good with those that had been injured or hurt. Unfortunately, as a result of circumstances, Hugo was branded a troublemaker and had been in trouble with the police in relation to drugs. People in Hugo's neighborhood saw him as a "bad" person. When Hugo was diagnosed with dyslexia and helped to change his beliefs about his capabilities, he became a valuable contributor to society by working for an animal charity.

People behave very differently in different areas of their lives. As Chapter 11 covers in detail, people function at several logical levels:

>> Purpose

>> Identity

>> Values and beliefs

>> Capabilities and skills

>> Behavior

>> Environment

As Hugo increased his capabilities, his beliefs about himself began to change. This change allowed him to move into an environment in which he felt valued. The result was that Hugo experienced an identity shift from "I'm a failure" to "I can actually make a contribution." Hugo's change of identity affected his behavior, and feedback from the animals and the people with whom he worked made him feel appreciated, which reinforced his newfound identity. So although Hugo's behavior had been bad, it didn't make him a bad person; he's much more than his bad behavior and is, in fact, loving and kind. Hugo is just happy to live each day feeling good about himself and his contribution to his human and nonhuman team and feels he's found a purpose in life.

The mind and body are interlinked and affect each other

Holistic medicine works on the premise that the mind affects the body and the body affects the mind. To maintain a healthy human being, a medical practitioner needs to do more than merely suppress the symptoms of illness. They have to examine the mind and body and treat both together.

Recent research on emotion at the cellular level in the body shows just how integrated the mind-body connection is. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that transmit impulses along your nerves. They're the means by which your brain communicates with the rest of your body. Each thought you think reaches out to the farthest, smallest cell in your body via neurotransmitters.

In addition, further research discovered that the same neurotransmitters that are found in the brain can also be produced by your internal organs. So the idea that messages are initiated and transmitted in straight lines along the neurons is no longer true; these messages can be initiated and transmitted by your organs as well. Dr Candace Pert, at the National Institute of Mental Health, refers to the "bodymind" — the mind and body working as an integrated whole because, at the level of the neurotransmitter, no separation exists between the mind and the body.

To gain a better understanding of this connection and see it in action, follow these steps:

TRY THIS

1. **Make a circle with your left finger and thumb.**
2. **Now link your right finger and thumb through the first circle.**

   The circles are interlinked and come apart only by you pulling on one or other of your hands.

3. **Think of someone you really like and pull hard to break the circles.**

   Pretty tough, huh?

4. **Think of someone you really dislike and pull hard to break the circles.**

   Was it a bit easier?

Many people find that they require less effort to separate the circles when thinking of someone they don't like. This demonstrates how a simple thought can affect your body.

Stress is a result of tension. Tension is created when expectations aren't met — either self-imposed expectations or those that others impose on you. You also experience tension when you feel under pressure to do something at which you're not competent, do it in a limited time period, or do something that conflicts with your values.

TECHNICAL STUFF

State refers to your state of mind and body. It's a combination of how the neurological processes of your mind and body interact with and affect each other. For example, if you're physically tired, you may not be as flexible in how you deal with a "difficult person," or you could be quarrelsome if you're experiencing a blood sugar slump.

Remaining aware of your reaction to circumstances and people is useful. When you find yourself getting tense, change your state; for example, you may be holding your breath, hunching your shoulders, putting off doing some work or seeing someone, or feeling angry with or "bad" around certain people. You can change your state (from tense to relaxed) by doing something as simple as eating a piece of chocolate or focusing on your breathing for a few minutes. At other times, you may need to stop and question what's creating the sense of tension within you. Re-examining your values often provides a clue very quickly.

REMEMBER Create the appropriate state that serves you in maintaining a sense of well-being.

Having choice is better than not having choice

NLP promotes choice for an individual as a healthy way of life. Sometimes you may feel that you don't have the choice to change jobs, shift to another country, or get out of an unhappy relationship. You may find yourself saying, "I have no choice," or "I must do this."

You can be held back from making much-needed change by fear of change, little confidence in your abilities, lack of knowing the steps to take, or even a lack of awareness of your own strengths. To combat this problem, NLP asks, "What if things were different?" and aims to open your horizons by making you conscious of all the resources you already have or can acquire as well as possibilities you may not have considered.

Choices aren't always a blessing. Sometimes having too many avenues to choose from can throw you into a state of paralysis. A good solution is to make a list of all the pros and cons and then sleep on it before making your decision.

NLP helps you to explore your reasons for wanting change, even if that reason is just a little niggle of discontent. Change can be choppy, like riding the rapids, but the people we know who have made it through — having decided on choices that they made for themselves — are much more content and in control of their lives. Chapter 20 goes into detail on how to make change easier. Go to Chapter 4 to get help with deciding what you want from your life and how to begin to implement it.

ANECDOTE A major tech giant had announced another wave of layoffs. The employees waited, hoping they wouldn't be forced to go. The tech sector, once booming, was recalibrating — and suddenly, even the most talented developers weren't guaranteed a role. The general belief was that people had no choice other than to hang on to their current job regardless of how far the company pushed them.

The employees who were relieved to escape from the stress were those who knew what they wanted from their jobs and had made provisions to move into alternative careers or who were willing to look at all the available options, no matter how far-fetched they seemed.

Modeling successful performance leads to excellence

If you aspire to be a top performer in any field, NLP provides the tools you need to model someone, take what that person does well and replicate it. Instead of big ambitions, you may have a very simple desire, such as modeling the skills of a colleague who always completes projects according to schedule or a friend who always knows the right thing to say at the right time. Modeling people's successes is a great way to turn potential negative feelings of envy into a constructive process for experiencing their success for yourself. You can find practical tools for modeling in Chapter 19.

Final Words on Presuppositions: Give Them a Whirl

Test the presuppositions presented in this chapter for yourself by behaving as if the generalizations are true. Practice those that you find particularly useful until they become second nature. While trying out the NLP presuppositions, make a list and pick one each day to live by. You'll soon find that you're living the presuppositions and "the living is easier"!

One great way to increase your understanding of NLP is to explore your basic assumptions, or presuppositions, about life. Whatever you currently think about different people and problems, how you communicate and what's important, sometimes adopting a new perspective can help by triggering new action or behavior.

No correct response to any of these presuppositions exists. As you get a feel for each one in turn, consider it carefully. You don't have to agree with them all. You can simply try them on for size and see, hear, and feel what happens.

Chapter **3**

Discovering Who's Directing Your Life

B reathing is something you do unconsciously. Until we ask you to become aware of your breathing, you don't notice each breath, the air going in through your nose, or the movement of your chest and diaphragm with each inhalation and exhalation. By paying attention to your breathing, you bring it into your conscious awareness. As you continue to read these words, you then stop noticing your breathing again; it slips back out of your awareness along with the other processes that run your body.

Do you consciously know when the time comes for you to feel thirsty or, indeed, how to consciously pick up a glass of water when you're thirsty? We challenge you to activate consciously each isolated muscle in your arm, in the right order, to pick up a glass of water and get it to your mouth. Impossible? Do you need a degree in anatomy and physiology before you can attempt to raise your arm consciously? This example demonstrates the huge influence that your unconscious mind has on the running of your body, outside of your conscious awareness.

If you still have any doubts about the power of your unconscious mind on your body, consider an experiment conducted by researcher Paul Thorsen, who hypno-tized a man and told him that a particular pen was a hot skewer. When Thorsen then touched the subject's arm with the pen, a blister formed in that spot.

In this chapter you get to meet your unconscious mind and discover how to use your brain to focus on and help you achieve your goals more easily and quickly. You find out about the psychology of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and phobias, and you discover how you can overcome them. Most importantly, you learn about your beliefs and values — the drivers that motivate you. When you find out that your beliefs have a structure and that you can change that structure, you're well on your way to taking charge of your emotions, your memories and the way you choose to respond to people and events in your life, without the baggage of the past weighing you down.

Grasping How Your Fears Can Drive You in the Wrong Direction

Your unconscious mind not only controls the running of your body but also has a tremendous impact on the results you get in your life. Have you ever wanted to do something consciously but ended up doing something totally different? Often, fear of what you don't want to happen can have a debilitating effect on you (see Chapter 7 for details of the NLP "away from" meta program — focusing more on avoiding what you don't want than on moving toward what you desire).

You can decide consciously that you want to achieve a goal, but if your unconscious mind isn't on-board, it may "assist" you by fulfilling its own agenda, which may be contrary to what you consciously think you want. Imagine what you can achieve when you're in rapport with your unconscious mind and able to go in the direction that gets you to your goals quickly.

ANECDOTE

Raj started his own company. Despite setting goals and having exceptional ability in his chosen field, he wasn't getting his business off the ground and was in a complete panic as he watched his savings dwindling away. NLP coaching helped him to become consciously aware of a very closely held belief that "I can't sing the blues in an air-conditioned room." This idea comes from a song from a songwriter who discovered that he was able to sing the blues only in poverty; success and wealth cramped his musical style. Similarly, Raj was afraid that success would stop him from experiencing life and extinguish his creativity. When he realized that he was able to choose to experience life as a millionaire or a tramp, his behavior changed and his business improved dramatically.

REMEMBER

The key to bringing your unconscious mind into alignment with your conscious desires and goals is understanding the strengths of each part and how they work. The following sections tell you what you need to know.

Distinguishing between conscious and unconscious

In NLP terms, your conscious mind is that part that's aware of things around and within you at any given moment in time, which, according to research conducted by George Miller in 1956, is a meager seven (plus or minus two) chunks of information. (For more information on Miller's findings, head to Chapter 8.) The conscious mind can be compared with the tip of an iceberg that reaches out of the water, whereas the unconscious mind is the nine-tenths of the iceberg that's submerged underwater.

Your conscious and unconscious minds excel at different things (as Table 3-1 shows). One easy way to consider the difference is to think of your conscious mind as being focused on processing practical and logical activities to get things done while your unconscious mind engages at a more creative, intuitive, and emotional level.

TABLE 3-1   **Comparing the Conscious and Unconscious Minds**

The Conscious Mind Excels At	The Unconscious Mind Is Better At
Working linearly	Working holistically
Processing sequentially	Intuition
Logic	Creativity
Verbal language	Running your body
Mathematics	Taking care of your emotions
Analysis	Storing memories

Understanding your quirky unconscious mind

As with your friends and their little foibles, your unconscious mind has some interesting quirks with which you need to become acquainted so that you can get on with it better. The ideal situation is having your conscious and unconscious minds working as one, pulling in the same direction.

By getting your unconscious mind on-board — working with you rather than against you — you can achieve much more in life, such as setting and achieving compelling goals with much less effort.

Your unconscious mind can't process negatives

If we say to you, "Don't think about watching a film," you may get a sense of yourself in front of your TV or in a theater before you shift your thoughts to something else to comply with the instruction. This little exercise shows that before you can stop yourself thinking about something, you have to deal with the thought that automatically pops into your head.

Your unconscious can't process negatives: It interprets everything you think as a positive thought. So if you think *I don't want to be poor*, your unconscious mind focuses on the "poor." Because it doesn't do negatives, the focus becomes "poor" and everything you associate with poor. Being poor then becomes the goal in your unconscious mind and, like a young child desperate to please, it helps you behave in a way that keeps you poor. Not the outcome you wanted!

That's why stating your goals in the positive is so important. In this instance, instead of thinking *I don't want to be poor*, you need to think *I want to be wealthy.* Doing so creates the representations in your mind of what being wealthy means to you and helps you keep your focus on what you want. For more information on the importance of stating goals in a positive way, head to Chapter 4 and the "Well-Formed Outcome" checklist that's part of the online Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com.`

Your unconscious mind needs direction

Yogis liken the unconscious mind to a mischievous monkey, always leaping from tree to tree. The way to keep the monkey occupied and out of mischief is to stick a pole in the ground and direct the monkey to climb up and down the pole. If your conscious mind doesn't provide a direction for your unconscious mind, the latter looks to find direction wherever it can. A directionless teenager, for example, may find that joining a street gang provides a structure to their life; they then receive directions from the leader of the gang. Your unconscious mind does the same thing — without direction and focus, it may create destructive behaviors in you.

To direct the unconscious mind, you need to open communication channels between your conscious and your unconscious minds. This rapport is developed by finding a quiet time for meditation or relaxation and examining the memories presented to you by your unconscious mind.

Your unconscious mind — the preserver of memories

As far back as 1957, the Penfield study indicated that all your experiences are recorded faithfully in memory. While awake, a woman's brain was stimulated with an electrode, and Penfield discovered that she was able to recall in minute

detail a childhood party. The storage and organization of these memories is the responsibility of the unconscious mind.

Part of the function of the unconscious mind is to repress memories associated with unresolved negative emotions.

Aisha's relationship with Tom ended, and she started having severe stomach cramps for which the doctors could find no physical cause. In therapy, Aisha remembered the day her mother left the family for another man. She got a picture of her mother driving away and herself calling, "Come back, Mommy, my tummy hurts." Aisha realized that the stomachache she'd used as a child as a ploy to get her mother to come back had been recreated by her unconscious mind to make Tom come back to her. The memory had lain dormant all those years.

Another function of the unconscious mind is to present repressed memories for examination to release trapped emotions. Unfortunately, like very young children embarrassing their parents in public, the unconscious mind doesn't always pick the most appropriate time to present a memory that needs to be examined. So you can be at a family gathering, basking in feelings of love and contentment, when your unconscious mind says to you, "Deal with the memory of Dad smacking you on your birthday . . . *now*!" Suddenly you're blubbing into your dessert in front of your highly embarrassed relatives.

Your unconscious mind is a lean, mean learning machine

Your unconscious thrives on new experiences. It needs to be fed with new possibilities and gets you into trouble when you don't keep it from getting bored.

You can find constructive ways of keeping your mind occupied, such as reading, doing puzzles, or taking up a hobby. Today, people also use apps to learn new skills in bite-sized lessons, train their cognitive abilities with brain games, or explore creativity using digital tools. Activities like these help your brain grow more physical dendrites — the branches of a brain cell responsible for making new connections and keeping your mind agile. For calming your mind, keeping stress levels at bay, and increasing your creativity, nothing works better than mindfulness and meditation practices.

Your unconscious mind behaves like a highly moral being

The unconscious mind keeps you on the straight and narrow path of whatever morality it learns, by enforcing its morality on you, even if society judges that morality to be wrong.

Terrorists can kill and destroy without qualms because their moral code teaches them that they're freedom fighters. They therefore believe that they're moral people, fighting against a criminal society. A gang member may kill to protect the honor of their gang, without feeling any guilt because they've learned that gang honor is more important than following the law of the land that makes murder illegal.

If, however, your unconscious mind decides that you deserve to be punished, you can be wracked with guilt and exhibit behaviors designed to punish yourself, even though no law says that what your unconscious mind sees as bad is actually so.

In a different vein, your unconscious mind can support behaviors that create positive results in your life, which then ripple out into other people's lives. People like Emmeline Pankhurst, Rosa Parks, Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela changed history as a result of their strongly held morals about freedom and fairness. Sadly, even grand ideals, stemming from a desire for unity and prosperity, can become grossly distorted, as happened in the case of Adolf Hitler.

ANECDOTE

Channin had experienced several unsatisfactory relationships and was in one at the time she came to see Romilla. During a series of breakthrough sessions, Channin admitted to feeling that she manipulated men and discarded them when she felt they were looking for commitment. Investigations revealed a memory of when she was five years old and had "manipulated" her father, who was verbally violent, into apologizing to her. When Romilla suggested that Channin's father really loved her even though he was unable to show it, and that he had found the resources within himself to express his love by apologizing to her, Channin was shocked.

Identifying the negative feelings of guilt that she'd felt all her life allowed Channin to move on and leave a relationship that wasn't fulfilling her needs and modify the behaviors that drew her into unrewarding relationships in the first place.

Delving inside the Brain

Our knowledge of the brain is becoming increasingly more sophisticated, and the topic of neuroscience is attracting much interest from the NLP, coaching, and personal development communities. In fact, neuroscience is the hot topic for anyone fascinated by human potential. This is an exciting time for people interested in finding out how their brain affects their subjective experience because we still have so much to learn and understand.

Looking at the three key parts

The human brain is one of the most complex structures in the universe, with some 86 billion neurons, each capable of making around 10,000 connections. It's a fascinating system of activity, constantly shifting according to different experiences and aided by enormous processing power.

The brain developed in three stages during the process of human evolution:

» **Reptilian brain:** The most primitive part of the brain that exists when you come into the world as a baby and which will keep your body functioning if the brain becomes damaged. Think about this part as being responsible for breathing and all the basic physical reflexes necessary for survival.

» **Mammalian or limbic brain:** The home of the reticular activating system (see the "Tracking Information: Your Reticular Activating System" section later in this chapter) and the amygdala — host to emotional responses including fear, stress, and love — and the reward system that gets a kick out of risky behaviors. Think of this part of your brain as the instinctive, emotional element.

» **Cognitive brain:** The home of the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making, planning, social relationships, and the management of risk taking. Consider this the intelligent part of the brain, which integrates the other parts into a coherent whole. Picture it as the intelligent leader of the system.

Recognizing neuroplasticity as the basis for development

NLP practitioners have always challenged the concept that the brain is hard-wired and can't be changed: They believe that people can and do change the way they think. This belief is now borne out by scientific research. New technologies such as fMRI scanners that can peer into the brain while subjects take part in a range of experiments have dramatically increased our understanding of the brain's functions and how it develops and changes through a human's lifetime.

Not that long ago, common thinking held that the structure of the brain was fully formed by the age of three and would stagnate thereafter. It was also believed that only a small part of the brain was used, it lost power over time, damage was irreparable, and you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

BRAIN UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Adolescent behavior has been the butt of jokes for centuries. Now, however, that pilloried age group can be viewed from a fresh perspective. Research conducted at University College London's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience has shown that during the teenage years and early twenties, the brain is in a state of heightened neuroplasticity. Studies of social cognition show that teenagers are undergoing a profound transition in their sense of self; for this reason, they exhibit behaviors that are viewed as disruptive, selfish, rude, and so on by adults. Teenagers act differently with their peers, are highly prone to risk taking, and are acutely sensitive to being embarrassed. They're more interested in what they're wearing and the small details of their own lives than life-shattering events reported in the news. Being a teenager is fraught with difficulties, including being particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying.

So, rather than dismissing teenagers as troublesome and difficult, we need to understand the biology that drives them. Educators should apply this knowledge to improve teenagers' concept of self and boost their achievements.

More recent research has ditched those beliefs and points to the ability of the brain to change and develop due to its innate *neuroplasticity.* Much of the building of your brain is the result of experience, which can occur at any age. In relation to NLP, this is all great news in terms of your ability to harness the power of your brain to change habits and entrenched behaviors, to learn more effectively, and get different results. The neuroplasticity of the brain also offers hope for people who have suffered brain injuries or struggle with their mental health.

Tracking Information: Your Reticular Activating System

With billions of pieces of data coming in through your five senses every second, you need a way to maintain your sanity — rather like managing an out of control social media feed. Therefore, you filter this deluge of information through a network of neurons and neural fibers in your mammalian brain located in the brain stem so that only a tiny proportion gets through to the rest of the brain. This filtering network is called the *reticular activating system*, or *RAS* for short, and it works like an antenna, scanning for stimuli and alerting your brain to pay attention to and only let in data that meets at least one of the following criteria:

>> **The information is important to your *survival*.** For example, when you're in a deep sleep but wake up because you hear a strange noise in the house or when you're jaywalking while daydreaming, and you're alerted to traffic bearing down on you.

>> **The information has *novelty* value.** Remember the last time you decorated a room? Initially you had this feeling of real pleasure each time you walked into the room as you saw the wallpaper with fresh eyes. Then, after a few weeks, you noticed that a painting was askew or an knick-knack not quite centered but didn't necessarily notice the pattern on the wallpaper or the color of the paint. This reaction is because the novelty has worn off.

>> **The information has a high *emotional* content.** The survival aspect also applies to other people; you're alert instantly if your baby's breathing changes but sleep through your partner's snoring.

Can you remember the last time you misplaced a loved one in a mall and you searched high and low, promising to do all kinds of horrible things to them for getting lost? And then, as if the crowd faded into obscurity, you caught a glimpse of your loved one in the distance and zeroed in on them with nothing but a huge sense of relief. If you had no emotional connection with the misplaced person, they'd be just another body in the crush. But because they're a loved one, they stand out like a beacon.

Effectively the RAS operates on stimuli that are above its threshold of observation. It spots unusual patterns and reacts to them; it's a personal radar detector that brings relevant information to your attention. Mundane and daily routines slip below this threshold, helping you to notice things that are relevant to your current goals or responsibilities.

We're sure you know of chronically unlucky people, those who say things like, "I never win anything," or "Lucky breaks don't come my way." These people's belief systems stop them from seeing opportunities. If an opportunity were to jump up and slap them in the face, they'd say, "That's too good to be true," and skirt around it. In contrast, some people always land on their feet — the "lucky" people, those who are open to possibilities. Their way of thinking has them seeing success in failure because their belief systems dictate that they deserve to win.

Your beliefs affect the threshold level of the RAS. Someone who believes that they're a poor speller may not "see" an advertisement for a reporter's job, even though this shortcoming could easily be addressed with tools like spellcheck or autocorrect. Ironically, they may be much better at investigating stories than people who don't have a hang-up about their spelling ability and go ahead and apply.

By becoming aware of your beliefs, which are essentially assumptions that you hold to be true, you can identify how these beliefs may be stopping you from achieving your goals, taking corrective action, and moving forward with your life.

Is there something you really want to achieve but something is holding you back? It will be useful for you to look at the beliefs you have around it. It's possible that one key belief is blocking you from noticing the very opportunities that can help you succeed. For example, if you believe, "I'm not ready yet," you may unconsciously filter out opportunities such as putting yourself forward for a promotion, speaking up in meetings, or applying for a role that will stretch you. A coach can help uncover the root cause of your limiting belief and guide you toward replacing it with a more empowering alternative. Chapter 4 covers how to shape beliefs into well-formed outcomes.

Examining How Memories Are Created

Understanding how your brain works and how memories are created is important because this understanding increases your choice of behavior. However, much research still lies ahead for neuroscientists trying to uncover the full scientific picture of how memories are actually formed. So many memories, emotions, and resulting behaviors are unconscious, and, until you can access them, it can be difficult to understand which memories are affecting your present experience.

Memories appear to be created when information from the RAS is sent to the part of the brain called the amygdala, where the data are given an emotional weighting before being passed on to the hippocampus. The hippocampus evaluates the data in relation to those held in long-term memory and presents them to the cortex for analysis and refiling into long-term memory. Figure 3-1 shows you where these strangely named brain parts are located.

If you ever find yourself bemoaning your poor memory, consider the idea that engaging all your senses in a conscious, mindful way increases your ability to notice and record experience. You may need to adopt a new learning strategy in order to capture information, such as a dance routine, and to reinforce your memory of it through practice, talking through the steps or watching videos.

By contrast, you may have some sympathy for those who remember too much. *Hyperthymesia* is a condition that affects people who have uncontrollable memory recall. Give them a date and they can recall what happened on that day in near-perfect detail. The recall tends to focus on personal life experiences or public events that are particularly relevant and is believed to be an unconscious process rather than the result of obsessive learning.

Somatosensory cortex

Ventroposterior
lateral and medial
nucleus of thalamus

Prefrontal cortex

Thalamus

Hypothalamus

Amygdala
Hippocampus

Smell pathway

Medial
lemniscus

Touch, pain,
temperature,
sense of position
pathways

Taste pathway

FIGURE 3-1:
Finding your
way around the
human brain.
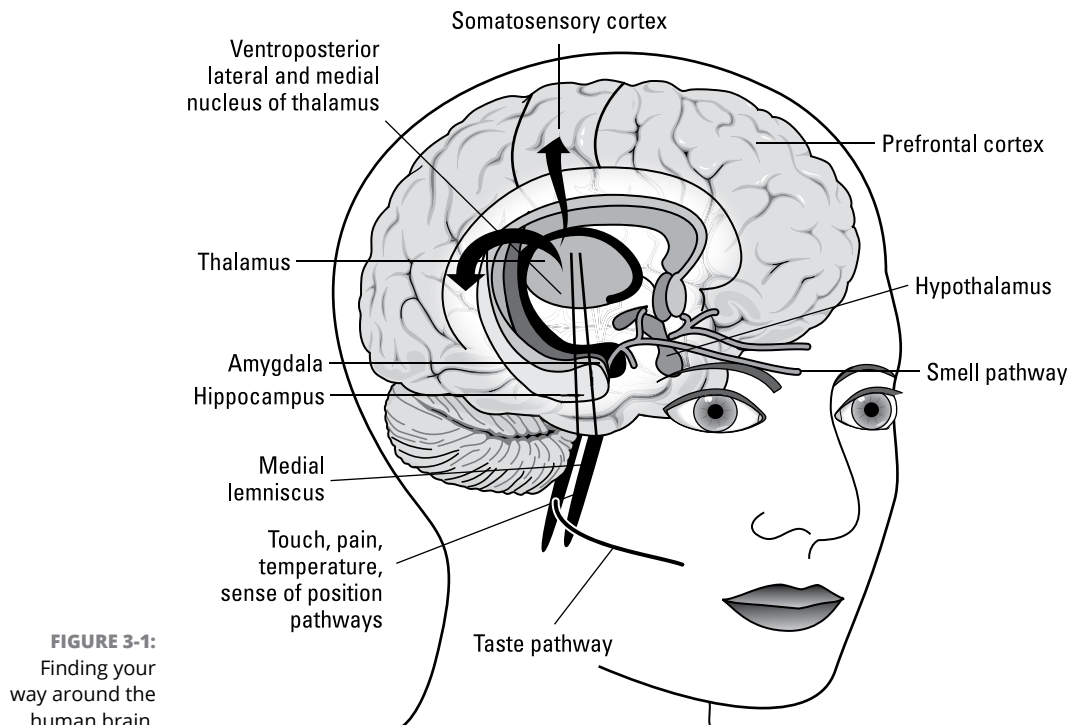
Encountering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) first gained public recognition through films about the experiences of Vietnam War veterans, such as *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Today, people are much more aware that PTSD is common among those working in the emergency services as well as the unfortunate victims of war, abuse, and crime.

PTSD occurs when the amygdala receives input with a very high emotional value, gets in a panic, and can't send the information to the hippocampus. Because of this, the traumatic event gets trapped within the amygdala, and the hippocampus is unable to present the memory to the neocortex for evaluation, which means the brain can't make sense of the event. Because the amygdala is primarily involved with your survival, in PTSD sufferers, it stays in a constant state of arousal, causing flashbacks and high levels of anxiety.

Virginia Woolf wrote the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* in the early 1920s, and her portrayal of Septimus Smith clearly identifies him as suffering from PTSD after the horrors of the World War I. Unfortunately, at the time, conventional medicine was

relatively inexperienced at dealing with psychological problems. Patients like Septimus Smith were advised to have plenty of rest in order to recuperate and were given useless advice such as "Pull yourself together, man."

Phobias and PTSD are part of a group of *anxiety disorders*. They have similar structures, in that a memory stays trapped in the amygdala. Fortunately, these days, the NLP Fast Phobia Cure is available to help people recover from these types of anxiety. Head to the section "Employing the NLP Fast Phobia Cure" later in this chapter for details.

Handling phobias

A phobia is a distortion of reality: a nonlogical response to a perceived threat. Experts have differing opinions about the origins of phobias. Some psychologists say phobias are the result of a trauma, such as having a frog dropped down your back as a child, whereas others believe that phobias are a learned response, such as when a two-year-old child is confronted by a cobra and becomes phobic as a result of the reactions of the adults around them. Flip to the later "Employing the NLP Fast Phobia Cure" section for help in overcoming phobias.

ANECDOTE

Romilla used to have a very strong phobia of snakes. The phobia was so intense, it triggered frequent nightmares that left her shaken and exhausted. In fact, she let herself down rather badly when she walked into a friend's living room and freaked out in front of a group of complete strangers. The cause of her out-of-character behavior was a stuffed cobra on display.

She overcame her phobia in a small zoo in Mombasa, Kenya. By the time she managed to get past her hysterics and drape a python around her neck, she'd attracted a large crowd of locals who were in stitches of laughter. (And by the way, snakes don't feel slimy — and she no longer has nightmares about them, either.)

Had she known NLP at the time, the process of overcoming her phobia would have been much less traumatic, using the NLP Fast Phobia Cure.

Employing the NLP Fast Phobia Cure

The NLP Fast Phobia Cure allows you to re-experience a trauma or phobia without experiencing the emotional content of the event or having to face the trigger that normally sets off the phobic response. You need to ensure that you work on this process in an environment where you know yourself to be completely safe and in the presence of another person who can help to keep you grounded if you begin to panic.

FUN WITH PHOBIAS

Below are some words to have fun with at the dining table. A word of caution: Please don't accuse members of the opposite sex of having phronemophobia (fear of thinking), and you may want to sit someone suffering from ablutophobia (fear of bathing) near your mother-in-law if you suffer from pentheraphobia (fear of mother-in-law):

- **Chaetophobia:** Fear of facial hair
- **Peladophobia:** Fear of bald people
- **Philophobia:** Fear of falling in love or being in love (probably the saddest phobia)
- **Phobophobia:** Fear of phobias
- **Xyrophobia:** Fear of razors
- **Galeophobia:** Fear of cats
- **Triskadekaphobia:** Fear of the number 13
- **Otophobia:** Fear of the number 8

This process ensures that you examine an experience while you're doubly dissociated from the memory, creating a separation between you (in the now) and the emotions of a trauma or a phobic response. In the following steps, the double dissociation is achieved by watching yourself in a cinema (dissociation), while watching yourself on a cinema screen (double dissociation) (you can find more on dissociation in Chapter 10):

1. **Identify when you have a phobic response to a stimulus or a traumatic or unpleasant memory that you want to overcome.**

2. **Remember that you were safe before and are safe after the unpleasant experience.**

3. **Imagine yourself sitting in the cinema, watching yourself on a small, black-and-white screen.**

4. **Now imagine floating out of the "you" that's sitting in the cinema seat and into the projection booth.**

   You can now see yourself in the projection booth, watching yourself in the seat, watching the film of you on the screen.

5. **Run the film in black and white, on the very tiny screen, starting before you experienced the memory you want to overcome and running it through until after the experience, when you were safe.**

6. **Freeze the film or turn the screen completely white.**

7. **Float out of the projection booth, out of the seat and into the end of the film.**

8. **Run the film backward very quickly, in a matter of a second or two, in full color, as if you're experiencing the film, right back to the beginning, when you were safe.**

9. **You can repeat steps 7 and 8 until you're comfortable with the experience.**

10. **Go into the future and test an imaginary time when you may experience the phobic response.**

TIP

In Chapter 9, you discover all about setting anchors. You can use anchoring to put yourself or a client into a resourceful emotional state before going through the steps of the Fast Phobia Cure.

Accepting That Beliefs and Values Make a Difference

You may have heard someone say, "Teenagers today have no values." Well, everyone has values; they're just different for different people and different groups of people. Your values and beliefs are unconscious filters that you use to decide what bits of data coming in through your senses you pay attention to and what bits you ignore. You know what that means, don't you? The unconscious nine-tenths of your brain has been sitting there on the quiet, building all sorts of beliefs and making all sorts of decisions about you and your environment, and you're not even aware of them.

Getting to grips with the power of beliefs

Your beliefs can literally have the power of life and death over you. Your beliefs can help you achieve health, wealth, and happiness or keep you unwell, poor, and miserable.

REMEMBER

The beliefs we're talking about here are distinct from religious beliefs — these beliefs are the generalizations you make about your life experiences. These generalizations go on to form the basis of your reality that then directs your behavior. You can use one empowering belief, for example, to help you to develop another belief to the next level of achievement. So, "I'm a really good speller" helps you develop the belief that you enjoy words and are quite articulate. This

belief may lead you to believe that you can tell stories and suddenly you find that you have the courage to submit a short story to a magazine; and suddenly, you're a published author.

Just as you have positive, empowering beliefs, you can also have negative, disempowering beliefs. If you had the misfortune of being bullied at school, you may have developed a belief that people, in general, aren't pleasant. This belief may make you behave quite aggressively toward people when you first meet them. If some people then respond in a similarly aggressive way, their behavior may well reinforce your belief that "people aren't pleasant." You may not even notice when someone responds in a friendly manner because your belief filters aren't geared to noticing pleasant people.

REMEMBER

Be aware that a limiting belief may be lurking if you find yourself using or hearing words such as *can't*, *should*, *shouldn't*, *could*, *couldn't*, *would*, *ought*, and *ought not* — for example, "I couldn't possibly do your job." People often say, "Whether you believe you can or believe you can't, you're right." This is an inexorable, indisputable law.

Being impacted by the beliefs of others

The really scary thought is that other people's preconceptions can place false limitations on you, especially if the other people are teachers, bosses, family members or friends.

ANECDOTE

A very interesting study conducted with a group of children who had been tested and found to be of average intelligence illustrates how a teacher's belief can enhance or hinder a child's learning ability.

The pupils were split into two groups at random. The teacher for one group was told that the pupils were gifted; the teacher for the other group was told that they were slow learners. Both groups of children were retested for intelligence a year later. The intelligence score for the group in which the teacher thought the pupils were gifted was higher than when previously tested; in contrast, the alleged slow learners scored lower than they had the year before.

Sadly, these limitations aren't just the domain of overcrowded schools but exist in homes where parents shoehorn their children into an "acceptable" position. Other examples include a friend urging you to be cautious if you're considering leaving a secure job to pursue a dream or a boss with a different communication style to you who has a detrimental effect on your career progression. We hear of many cases in which doctors declare to patients that they'll never recover and witness how this statement negatively impacts their life span. Not only are some of these professionals perceived as always knowing more than you but you yourself may even place them on a pedestal.

A child can have difficulties overcoming the shortcomings of a teacher without parental assistance and even more so the restrictions of a parent or family environment. As an adult, however, you can weigh up the pros and cons of the advice you're given by seeing it from the other person's point of view. (We cover this situation in Chapter 6, which talks about exploring perceptual positions.) When you understand the reasons for the other person's opinion, you can choose to follow the proffered advice — or not. Also, with this knowledge behind you, you can always start to use your boss's communication style to get your message across and so progress in your chosen career.

Changing beliefs

Some of your beliefs can empower you, while others can limit the way you think and hold you back. The good news is that beliefs can and do change. Take the example of the four-minute mile. For years athletes didn't believe someone could run a mile in less than four minutes. Roger Bannister achieved this aim in May 1954. Soon after, even this record was broken several times over.

Are you thinking, "*But why would I want to change something that glues my world together?*" Yes, beliefs do hold your world together, but ask yourself whether it's for better or for worse. If a belief is holding you back, change it. If you find you need the security blanket of the old belief, you can always change it back.

When you think of a belief, you may make a picture, have a feeling, hear something, or experience some combination of all three of these sensations. These qualities of your beliefs — visual (pictures), auditory (sound), and kinesthetic (feelings) — are called *modalities*, which can be fine-tuned using *submodalities*: qualities such as brightness, size, and distance for pictures; loudness and tone for sounds; and pressure, heat, and location for feelings. Check out Chapter 5 for much more on senses and modalities.

One way of changing a belief is to adjust its submodalities. This process is useful because it helps you to loosen the grip that a limiting belief has on you and reinforce the effects of a positive belief to develop a more empowering belief. Suppose that you can't help but be drawn to people and have long been told that being subjective is bad — changing your belief to "*I'm good with people*" can make a huge difference to your confidence when dealing with others. Similarly, if you know that you're good at art, this belief can help you branch into a more art-based career. You can find out how to go about changing a belief in Chapter 10.

As a member of the human race, what beliefs are holding your -'isms (sexism, ageism, racism) in place and whose -isms are you allowing to box you in? A cluster of beliefs is called a *belief system*. A belief or belief system can support a particular value. Values are the *why* you do something. Beliefs direct your behavior, which then helps you to fulfil a value — provided your unconscious mind creates no conflicts.

Working with your values

Values are the hot buttons that drive all your behaviors and are your unconscious motivators and demotivators: You act because of your values. After you've acted, you use these values to judge whether the deed was good or bad. For instance, if you value honesty, you may decide to pick up a wallet you find in the street for safekeeping and feel good about handing it over to the police.

TIP

Values affect your choice of friends and partners, the types of goods you purchase, the interests you pursue and how you spend your free time. Your life has many facets. You're probably a member of a family, a team at work, and possibly a club related to your hobby. Each of these areas of your life has its own hierarchy of values, with the most important value at the top. The values at the top of the hierarchy are usually more abstract than those farther down and exert the most influence in your life. For example, in Figure 3-2, family and friends is fairly concrete, whereas happiness is more intangible.

Happiness

Love

Companionship

Togetherness
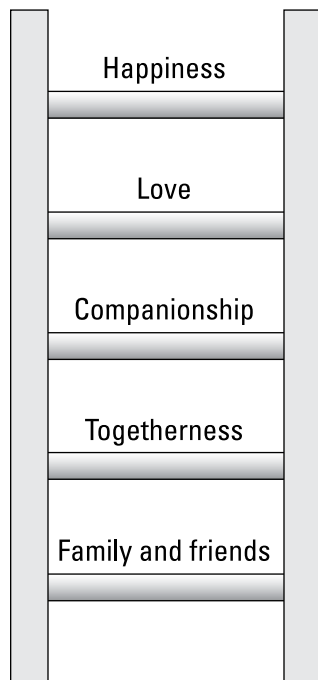
Family and friends

Distinguishing means-to-an-end values

Values can be *ends* values or *means* values, with means values occurring farther down the hierarchy, acting as the rungs in a ladder that enable you to reach your

ends values. Freedom is an ends value and all the other values in Figure 3-3 are means values. Means values are those that need to be fulfilled to get you to your final ends value. Freedom is harder to quantify than, say, money. In the example, you can have money without having freedom, but to have freedom, you need money. So freedom — which is an ends value — is dependent on money — a means value.
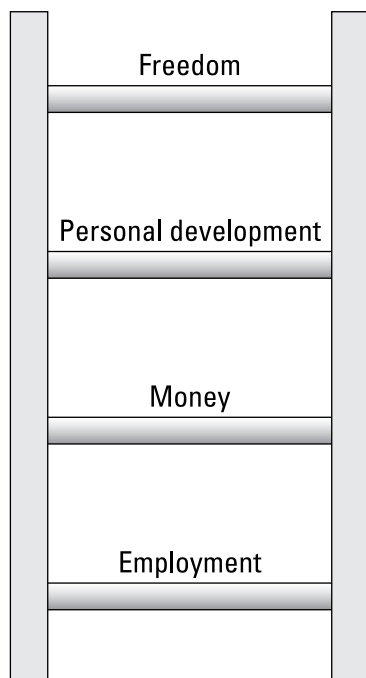
FIGURE 3-3:
A ladder of
happiness.

Your values can drive you toward pleasure or away from pain:

"Towards" values	"Away-from" values
Love	Guilt
Freedom	Sadness
Health	Loneliness
Happiness	Anger
Wealth	Poverty

Values with *away from* tendencies are indicative of negative emotions, negative decisions or emotional traumas that may be exerting an influence on your life. These tendencies can be released using techniques such as *time-line therapy* (which we discuss in detail in Chapter 13). The main purpose of any such technique is to learn the lessons that may be of value from negative events so the unconscious mind can release the trapped emotions. Essentially, time-line therapy works on the principle that your memories are arranged along a timeline, and by changing a memory along this timeline, you can release the hold of some memories, which in turn helps you to gain more control over your reactions to events and create more options in your life.

Creating values

Your values are essentially formed over three periods in your life:

>> The *imprint* period occurs from the time of your birth to when you're approximately seven years old. During this time, you learn largely unconsciously from your parents.

>> The *modeling* period occurs between the ages of 8 and 13 when you learn by consciously and unconsciously copying friends. Some of your most important values — core values — are formed when you're around 10 years old.

>> The *socialization* period occurs between the ages of 14 and 21. During this time you acquire values that affect your relationships.

Eliciting your values

If you recognize areas in your life that you think can be improved upon, you can then examine your values to find clues to help you make positive changes. By following the suggestions in the following steps, you can discover what's holding you back from getting what you want:

TRY THIS

1. **Pick an area (or context) in your life that you're not happy with or want to improve.**

   For instance, if you work in customer service but dread facing another day at work, a good place to start to elicit your values that are specific to this area is to ask yourself repeatedly, "In the context of working in customer service, what is important to me about what I do?" You can adapt this question to whichever area of your life you feel you want to improve.

2. **Make a list of what's important to you in this context.**

   Notice that the first few values come to mind very quickly. Stay with it, and another batch of values is sure to surface.

3. **Put these values in order of importance to you, with the most important appearing at the top.**

If you have trouble rearranging the list, just ask yourself, "If I could have A but not B, would this be okay?" If the answer is yes, A is of greater importance than B; if the answer is no, B needs to be moved above A. For example, in the following list of values, which relate to your job, you may decide that security is much more important to you than adventure:

Success

Power

Achievement

Adventure

Security

When you order these values according to importance, you may well find that those that surface later have greater significance for you.

4. **After you arrange your values, ask yourself if one value would be useful for you in this area of your life but is currently missing. Where would you slot it in the list of existing values?**

For instance, if you value your job but can't achieve the level of success you desire, perhaps you need "fulfillment" in your hierarchy. In fact, by going through this process you may decide that your new hierarchy looks like this:

Success

Fulfillment

Achievement

Adventure

Security

TIP

You may find step 3 easier to do if you write your values on sticky notes so that you can move them around.

Conflicting values

REMEMBER

When your means values are aligned (see the preceding section), achieving your ends value becomes much easier. Unfortunately, your values can end up in con-flict. You think you want to move toward an outcome, but your unconscious mind has other ideas that actually move you away from your objective.

You may have had a very financially poor childhood and have a strong *away from poverty* value, which is in direct conflict with a *toward wealth* value. So you want to be wealthy but keep thinking *I don't want to be poor*, which is what your unconscious mind helps you create in your life.

Another conflict can occur when you want to move toward two outcomes simultaneously, and you think you can only have one or the other — for example, you want to be thinner but also want to be able to enjoy your food.

Is an overriding value in your life stopping you from gaining satisfaction in other areas of your life? For instance, having money as your number one value may make you incredibly rich, but it may detract from your having a fulfilling relationship.

TIP Make sure that you don't spend so long fulfilling your means values that you miss achieving your ends value!

Daydreaming Your Future Reality

Contrary to what your teachers may have told you when they saw you gazing out of the classroom window, allowing your mind to wander can be a powerful first step in achieving your goals. By using the techniques described in earlier sections of this chapter, you can discover your heart's desire and take the first steps toward achieving it — all by daydreaming.

TRY THIS Give yourself permission to dream and play. What would you want to succeed at if a fairy godmother came and gave you one wish? Imagine that you have all the influence, contacts, and resources that you need to fulfill your deepest desire. Got your goal? Now follow these steps:

1. **Make a list of what's important to you about your goal — that is, all the reasons why you want it — and put them in order of importance.**

   Are you surprised by your values? Did you realize something you thought important wasn't that important after all, and did you think of a value that may have been missing in the beginning?

   If you're not sure how to do this exercise, refer to the section "Eliciting your values" earlier in this chapter.

2. **While still daydreaming, imagine floating out of your body and into the future, to a time when you may have achieved this goal.**

3. **Notice the pictures, sounds, and feelings, and manipulate them.**

   Can you make these stronger and more vibrant, and then even more so?

4. **From the place in the future, turn and look back to now and let your unconscious mind notice what it needs to know about and help you do in order for you to achieve your goal.**

   Remember to notice what the first step would be!

5. **When you've savored the dream fully, come back and take that first step!**

You may surprise yourself!

Chapter **4**

Taking Charge of Your Life

Memories can be a wonderful gift or a terrible scourge. They can cradle you softly or bind you in coils of barbed wire; they can propel you toward your dreams or trap you in the past. With the help of NLP and by understanding how you can program your mind, your past doesn't need to affect your future negatively.

This chapter is about making you the driver of, not a passenger in, your life. So put on your seat belt and prepare to go for a drive!

Taking Control of Your Memory

Your memories are recorded as pictures, sounds, and feelings. By adjusting the quality of how you see, hear, and experience them, you can enhance positive memories and take the sting out of negative ones. (Read more about adjusting the quality of your memories in Chapter 10.) You can start off by flexing your taking-control-of-your-memory muscles with the following simple exercises.

In the first exercise, you find out how to recall and manipulate a positive memory so that you can feel good at that moment, or even better, at will:

TRY THIS

1. **Recall a day when you felt really happy.**

2. **Notice what you see, hear, and feel when you bring back the memory.**

3. **If the memory is a picture, adjust its quality by making it bigger and brighter and bringing it closer. If you're observing yourself, try stepping into the picture to see whether doing so makes you feel even better.**

   You can find out about "stepping into the picture" in Chapter 10. Adjusting the qualities of the picture helps you to heighten the positive emotions.

4. **Take note of any sounds in the memory.**

   Does making them louder, or imagining that you can hear the sounds, either inside or outside your head, increase the positive feelings?

5. **Examine any feelings you have.**

   Where in your body are you experiencing them? Do they have a color, texture, or weight? Does moving the location of the feelings or changing their color, texture, and weight alter these feelings? Adjust these parameters to enhance the feelings.

This exercise allows you to manipulate the qualities of past experiences. More importantly, you see that you can change the structure of your memories in order to re-experience and heighten joyful ones, which means that you can also diminish the effect of negative experiences.

TRY THIS

Of course, not all memories are good ones. This second exercise shows you how to change the qualities of an unpleasant memory and distance yourself from it. By altering the attributes of a negative memory, you're able to release negative emotions that may still be holding you in their grasp. Follow these steps:

1. **Recall a memory that's only marginally unpleasant.**

WARNING

   For this exercise, and until you become more practiced at NLP techniques, use a memory that isn't too unpleasant. Please leave heavy-duty memories such as traumas for when you're with an experienced NLP practitioner or therapist.

2. **Notice the pictures, sounds, and any feelings that the memory brings up.**

3. **If you're in the picture, step out of it to become an observer.**

   We discuss stepping in and out of a picture in Chapter 10. For now, imagine that you're behind a video camera, filming yourself acting out the memory.

4. **Change any sounds so that they're softer, or perhaps you can make people in the picture speak in ridiculous voices.**

   If you hear sounds such as sirens or crying, reduce their volume and harshness. If you hear people saying something unpleasant, have them talk to you in a cartoon voice to mitigate their painful words.

5. **Adjust the quality of the picture.**

   Make it smaller, darker, and in black and white; move it far away from you until it's a dot and almost invisible. You may want to imagine sending the image up into the sun and watching it disappear in a solar flare. In this way, you experience yourself destroying the hold the memory previously had on you.

REMEMBER

Changing the memory doesn't mean that the event didn't occur. It does, however, prove that you have a choice over how the memory affects you now and the impact it has on your future.

Seeing It Because You Believe It

Imagine that you're among a group of people who witness a robbery. The chances are that everyone gives the police a different account of the event.

This situation arises because people experience the world through their five senses __ __ __ __ __. Your senses flood your brain with huge amounts of data, and you process only a very small fraction of the incoming information. *Filters* — combinations of who you believe you are, your values and beliefs, and your memories — dictate what your brain accesses. Read more about these filters in Chapter 8.

So your brain filters the input. These filters — shaped by your beliefs, values, memories, and sense of identity — determine what gets your attention and what gets screened out. In a stressful moment, like witnessing an accident, your brain will prioritize what it deems most urgent or meaningful — maybe the sound of impact, someone's cry for help, or the face of a loved one. This selective attention shapes how you experience the event — and what you remember about it later.

Just as your filters direct what you perceive, they also affect what you project into the world. Maybe you find yourself surrounded by angry, selfish, or jealous people. If so, perhaps you're harboring unresolved anger, believing in a win–lose scenario because there isn't enough love, wealth, happiness, or whatever to go round, believing that somebody else can only do well if you don't, or feeling jealous of someone else's success.

One of Romilla's clients, Carmen, was extremely unhappy at work because she was being bullied. Her supervisor, along with the departmental secretary, ganged up on Carmen, being very unpleasant and extremely petty.

Romilla helped Carmen to recognize that the supervisor was a very lonely woman who had no friends and was very unpopular at work. Whenever Carmen looked at the supervisor, she imagined that the woman was holding a placard saying, "I feel worthless and unlovable." Carmen started to replace fear with compassion. She realized that her own self-esteem needed a prop and began standing her ground — she discovered how to challenge her colleagues whenever they were unpleasant to her.

Although the process was difficult in the beginning, Carmen not only raised her own sense of self-worth but also became less troubled by the supervisor's behavior. Changing her thoughts about her own positive qualities increased her confidence, which in turn led to a change in the behavior of the people around her.

One way in which you can change things around you is by examining and changing yourself. You can achieve this by taking responsibility for your thoughts and actions and overcoming obstacles such as blaming others.

Focusing on blaming others

Blaming others for your misfortunes is a lot easier than taking responsibility for putting things right yourself. You can have difficulty recognizing that by blaming someone else, you're handing over your power to that person: You're adopting the role of victim and perpetuating the problem.

Carmen complained that her supervisor refused to give her a pay rise, which was true. However, Carmen was overly modest about her achievements at work, and because the supervisor wasn't the brightest penny in the purse, she was unaware of Carmen's good work. Romilla made sure that Carmen prepared well for her next appraisal, and Carmen confidently presented a list of her successes over the previous year as well as areas for improvement. She talked about her goals for her job and suggested ways in which she planned to work with her supervisor to achieve these aims.

In NLP terms, when you focus on something you give it a *frame*. For example, by focusing on the problem, "I can't get my leaking roof fixed because I don't have the money," you put yourself in a *problem frame*. Blaming someone else for your problem — for example, "I don't have the money because my lousy ex ran up a huge debt on our shared credit card" — is putting yourself in a *blame frame*. The problem frame and blame frame are closely linked because in both, you tend to blame someone or circumstances for a problem, and putting frames around

experiences like this limits you to thinking within a box. By reframing the experience, however, you think differently and can break out of constraining thought patterns.

Carmen switched away from the *blame frame* — in which she blamed her lack of a pay increase on her boss — and moved to taking action herself. When she realized her boss's inability to recognize her strengths, Carmen showed the flexibility of a master communicator by changing her behavior to get the response from her boss that she wanted. And yes, she did get the raise and a promotion!

REMEMBER To bring about positive change for yourself, you need to step away from the problem frame and take actions to secure what you want.

Getting stuck in a problem frame

Looking backward to examine a problem when something goes wrong within a system is useful for as long as it allows you to find and remedy oversights that created the problem. For example, considering the past could reveal an error in a process, a lack of communication between people or departments, or the need to train staff. However, if you concentrate on the problem without looking for a solution, you can get trapped in playing the blame game.

When you keep returning to analyze why things didn't work out as you wanted them to, you tend to focus on the following unhelpful details:

>> What the problem is

>> How long you've had this problem

>> Who's to blame for this problem

>> Why this problem occurred

>> Why you haven't done something about this problem

Constantly asking why is a negative approach and forces you to go even deeper into the problem, become defensive, and move further away from finding a positive solution.

To break out of the problem frame, a more constructive approach is to ask what you hope to achieve by doing something to deal with the problem. Adopting this mindset gives you the opportunity to take the following positive actions:

>> Move forward

>> Think about the result you want

- » Examine previous successes and model them for future use
- » Learn from what worked for other people and emulate their strategies
- » Resolve an issue

Staying in a problem frame feeds energy into an unwanted result — the problem. Focusing on what you want provides consistent, positive results as you direct your energy toward creating what you want. Chapter 7 covers the toward/away from meta program to help you focus on what you want rather than what you don't want.

Think of a time when you were so stuck in a problem that you were unable to see any solution. Maybe you're having such a problem right now. Ask yourself whether you're positively focusing on the result you want or negatively getting too tied up in the emotion of the moment to gain clarity.

Help is at hand in the form of the outcome-frame process, which we introduce in the following section, and the well-formed outcome process (described in the later section "Becoming smarter than SMART: Creating well-formed outcomes").

Shifting into the outcome frame

The outcome-frame approach is a smart, constructive process that suggests a different way of thinking about your problems and issues, a process that helps you to identify and then focus your mind on what you positively want. When you add in an efficient goal-setting process and monitor each step along the way, you can correct any deviation from your plan to attain the desired results easily and promptly.

Often, you can find yourself experiencing the same sort of problems time and again. In our experience, this cycle usually indicates that you have something to take on-board.

Keep asking yourself, "What's the lesson that I need to learn so that this problem is no longer an issue?"

One day, after asking this question for a while — or perhaps even instantly — the answer comes to you. Strangely, after you fully experience that aha moment, you can find that you no longer notice the problem recurring.

Perhaps the change comes about because you stop investing emotional energy in the problem or because you move on to tackling another set of lessons. Whatever the reason, the process works!

Following the Path to Excellence

Your brain is a learning machine that needs to be kept occupied. If it isn't, it can start to dwell on the negative and get you into all kinds of trouble. As a human being, you need to use all your ingenuity to direct your brain toward helping you to achieve your goals. To create a compelling, irresistible future, employ your brain to help you align your emotions, powers of observation, and behaviors in a way that keeps you motivated and moving toward your desired outcome quickly and easily.

Romilla's journey with setting and achieving goals was, for many years, a bit hit and miss. That changed when she adopted a simple, three-step approach, described later in this section, that blends powerful tools from NLP and Goal Mapping, a unique seven-step system created by Brian Mayne for setting and achieving goals.

Knowing what you want

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the protagonist asks the Cheshire Cat, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" Alice has no idea of where she wants to go but just wants to go somewhere. The Cheshire Cat responds that Alice is sure to get somewhere if she walks long enough. Like Alice, imagine what would happen if you asked for "a ticket to somewhere" next time you're at the airport.

When you're trying to move forward and achieve your goals, life is so much easier if you become very clear about what you really want. So often in life, you get caught up in what you don't want and expend an awful lot of energy, both physical and emotional, on avoiding the undesirable result.

To figure out what you want and put your energies toward achieving it, sit down and write your own obituary. You can then decide on the legacy you want to leave to posterity and the actions you need to take to fulfill that legacy. For more information on this technique, head to Chapter 3, where you can discover that your unconscious mind is a wonderful ally in assisting you to achieve the goals you want.

ANECDOTE

A client, Denise, was trying to "escape" from her second marriage. One of her first statements was, "I'm bad with relationships." On working through her issues, we discovered that she'd lost her much-loved grandfather as a very young child. The trauma of this particular event had gone very deep into Denise's psyche, and her fear of loss had been driving her to end her relationships before she had to experience that type of pain again. Because Denise was focusing, at a subconscious level,

on what she didn't want — the pain of loss — her unconscious mind was assisting her in maintaining behaviors that made her avoid the pain. Unfortunately, this approach created other problems. For her to get the relationship she craved, she had to think about and design exactly what she wanted in a relationship and then focus on creating that in her life.

One way to discover what you really want is to fast-forward into your future. Imagine that you're a healthy, articulate 90-something-year-old, speaking to a group of young business professionals who are eager to learn from your life experience. Would you share stories of the chances you didn't take — the dreams left unlived because fear, self-doubt, or other people's "you can't" or "you should" held you back? Or would you speak with pride about the life you *chose* to live — one built around your values, where you allowed yourself to dream boldly, take meaningful risks, and fulfill your purpose?

So, why don't you fast-forward through the years and look back at your life as it is now? Make a list of the dreams you'd dare to aim for if you had all the money and influence in the world and knew you could only succeed.

You may decide that you want material things like a huge nest-egg, a big house, fancy technology, and nice cars; you may desire a home and family of your own; or you may seek to be influential in the political or not-for-profit arena. Your life is your choice. Working through the following sections, and turning to Chapter 3 to read about values, helps you to discover the reasons why you want the goals you do and find the hot buttons that drive you.

Designing goals

If you want to succeed at designing goals that you can achieve consistently and easily, here are three crucial steps that will help you:

1. **Take a holistic look at different areas of your life and assess how well you think you're doing in each area.**

   Read more about this later in this chapter in the "Spinning the Wheel of Life" section.

2. **Discover exactly what you want.**

   The "Becoming smarter than SMART" section later in this chapter guides you through uncovering unconscious barriers that may have been causing you to give up on your goals.

3. **Create your Goal Map.**

   The section, "From Vision to Victory," found later in this chapter walks you through creating a practical, foolproof method for setting and achieving goals.

Spinning the Wheel of Life

This section gives you a snapshot of your life as it is right now, which can help you to identify where you're feeling satisfied and where there's scope for improvement. It highlights the areas that may need attention to help bring your life back into balance.

Take a look at the diagram of the wheel in Figure 4-1. If you were to label the sectors of the wheel with words that indicate the most important areas of your life, what areas would you choose? Do they correspond to those we include in the figure? Typically, people select labels such as work and career (including working within the home), health and fitness, finances and money, friends and family, relationships, personal growth and learning, fun and recreation, spirituality, and physical environment.
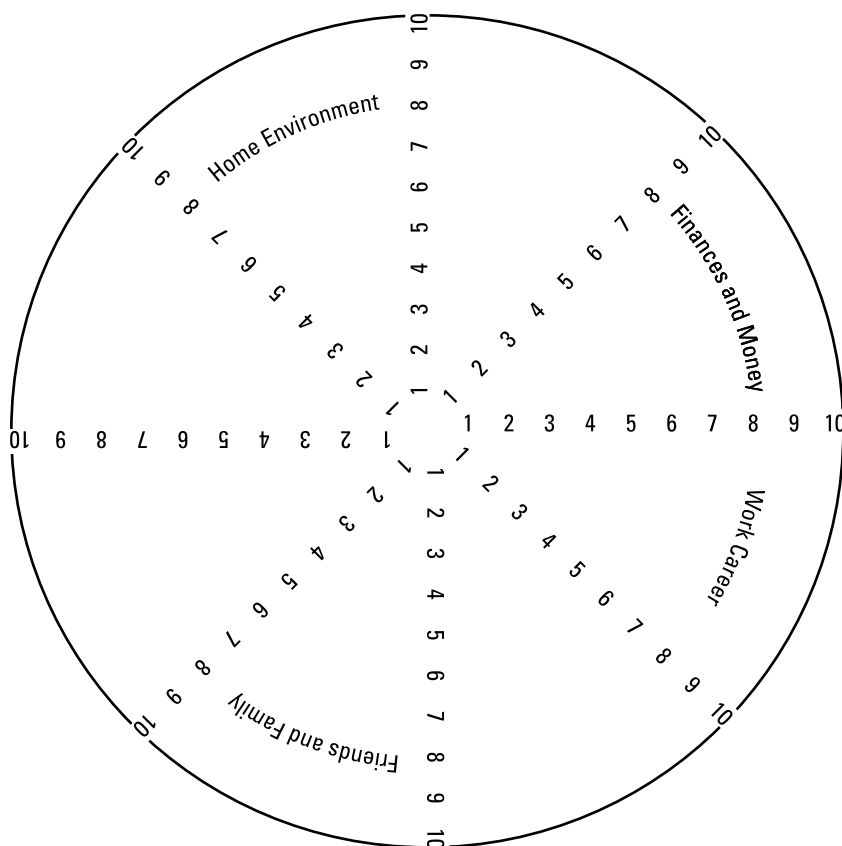
FIGURE 4-1: An example wheel of life.

Taking the center of the wheel as 0 and the outer edge as 10, rate your current level of satisfaction in each life area. Mark each score along the spoke and then connect the dots with a straight or curved line. This creates a new outer edge — your personal Wheel of Life.

In an ideal scenario, you'd have a smooth, symmetrical circle, showing that all areas are balanced and thriving. But if your line creates a jagged, lopsided shape — more like a bicycle wheel that's buckled than a smooth tire — it reveals where your life might feel out of alignment and in need of attention.

In a normal life, however, expecting to score perfect 10s for everything, all the time, is unrealistic. Life just isn't like that. When you're working hard, another aspect of your life may slip down the agenda. If you've been spending a lot of time doing up your home, for example, you're unlikely to have had time to socialize with friends. Or if you've been studying for exams, your exercise routine may well have flown out of the window.

By noticing those areas of your life where you're not happy with the scores, you have an opportunity to set yourself well-formed outcomes to address them. Do you, for example, want to pay off your credit cards and get your finances in good shape, or join an online dating agency to get some romance back into your life? As you focus on what you want and act, you take charge of your life rather than simply reacting to what comes at you.

Just as a bumpy wheel doesn't roll well, a life that's off-balance keeps you from living in a state of flow. The goal isn't perfection — it's awareness and gradual rebalancing.

The end of the year is always a good time to gather yourself together, review your whole life, and set yourself new outcomes for the coming year. However, anytime is a good time to take stock of your life, especially when you find yourself in the doldrums.

Once you have an area of your life that you want to work on, you will find it really useful if you can apply it to the remaining sections in this chapter.

Becoming smarter than SMART: Creating well-formed outcomes

SMART goals were once all the rage in the corporate world. According to the SMART model, goals need to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed (hence the acronym). This approach is a great discipline so far as it goes. NLP, however, allows a better way forward by adding sensory-specific

information that can help you modify your behavior or seek help in the form of extra resources, including guides and mentors. NLP makes SMART goals even smarter by helping you work out what you want using the well-formed outcome process. NLP builds on the SMART approach by making you use all your senses to design a goal and fine-tune it to be more than just specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed.

This process requires you to answer a series of questions that really help you explore the hows, whys, and wherefores of your desired outcome. By following this process, you begin to understand your true motives for wanting your goals, and you can weigh the pros and cons of success versus failure! A fairly common example of a well-formed outcome may be to want a better-paid job.

When your desired outcome meets the following criteria, NLP says that it satisfies the *well-formed conditions*. For every result you want to achieve, ask yourself the following seven questions:

1. Is the goal stated in the positive?
2. Is the goal self-initiated, maintained, and within my control?
3. Does the goal describe the evidence procedure?
4. Is the context of the goal clearly defined?
5. Does the goal identify the necessary resources?
6. Have I evaluated whether the goal is ecological?
7. Does the goal identify the first step I need to take?

In the following sections, we explain these points in more detail.

Is the goal stated in the positive?

What do you want? To put it another way, what would you rather have?

These questions help clarify your desired outcome because you must know very clearly what you want in order to maintain focus and direction. Vague goals like "I want to be thinner" or "I want more money" are insufficient because you're then satisfied by being a pound lighter or finding a $5 bill on the pavement.

Better goals are "I want to maintain a healthy weight of 168 pounds to feel energetic and confident" or "I want $10,000 plus in my bank account" or "I want a gross income of $150,000 plus per annum." Also, having negative goals such as "I don't want to stay in this job" can adversely affect your desires (see the nearby sidebar "Dwelling on the negative can damage your health"). Therefore, when you find yourself saying, "'I don't want," ask yourself instead, "What do I want?"

Asking for $150,000 plus instructs your Reticular Activation System (Chapter 3) to stay alert for more opportunities, even after you have hit the $150,000 limit.

Remaining positive isn't always easy. Life experiences and role models can create limiting or negative beliefs about self-worth and whether you deserve success and happiness. However, you can do a lot for yourself to develop a positive outlook on life. Start with addressing unresolved, unconscious emotional issues. Although you may get quicker, better results with the help of a coach who can assist you in examining and dealing with the issues, you can do some things to help yourself, such as using mindfulness to build personal resilience.

Mindfulness helps reduce stress and creates a mindset whereby you can appreciate the simple pleasures of life, manage your emotions more effectively, and see previously unknown possibilities. MRI scans examined by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh reveal that an eight-week course in mindfulness can change the structure of the brain. Mindfulness training reduces the size of the amygdala, the region associated with fear and stress, while increasing the pre-frontal cortex, the area linked to concentration and decision-making. (Check out *Mindfulness For Dummies* by Shamash Alidina for more details.)

You can also check out Chapter 10, which shows you how to change limiting beliefs and create empowering beliefs.

Recently, Romilla coached a client who'd been let go from her job as a result of unconsciously adopting damaging behaviors that were out of character. When examining the situation later, her client realized that she'd have behaved differently if she'd focused her energy on defining the job she wanted and finding better employment. Instead, she'd sapped her energy by remaining in a job she didn't enjoy and fallen into destructive, aberrant behaviors that took a toll on her health. Because she was unable to view life from a more positive perspective, she was living with stress of underperformance, lack of self-fulfillment, frustration, and anger on a daily basis.

Is the goal self-initiated, maintained, and within my control?

So often we hear of a person wanting to give up smoking who, when questioned, replies, "My wife wants me to stop." A person has a far better chance of succeeding if the drive to attain a particular outcome comes from within — for example, "I want to enjoy a long and healthy life — for me." In contrast, if your goal is, "I want my partner to take me away for two weeks in the sun during March," you need to recognize that your partner may have a different agenda, and this goal is therefore not under your control.

DWELLING ON THE NEGATIVE CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

A perceived threat causes a fight-or-flight response in your body and the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones aid your survival by affecting your biological responses. You become more alert; your heart rate and blood pressure go up; blood flows to larger muscle groups; and nonessential functions such as the immune and digestive systems shut down. Under normal circumstances, the hormone levels normalize when the event ceases to be perceived as a threat. When you feel stressed much of the time, however, the stress hormones don't stabilize and can cause chronic health problems such as hypertension, fatigue, obesity, and heart disease.

The good news is that staying positive helps you live longer! According to research, optimists may live longer, healthier lives. And the even better news is that NLP helps you to see the glass as half full rather than half empty.

Ask yourself these questions:

» Am I doing this for myself or someone else?

» Does the outcome rely solely on me?

ANECDOTE

When Kate ran a marketing consultancy, she realized that several projects involved working closely with business clients who were extremely stressed, busy, and disorganized. Lots of meeting time was wasted as her clients tried to find relevant documents on their chaotic desks or made hasty phone calls gathering information they'd forgotten to gather in advance.

Kate's well-formed outcome for future client assignments was thus "to work in a calm, efficient, and commercial way." Looking at her goal, it may not initially be apparent that she had control of the outcome because she was dependent on the clients playing their part. However, in applying the principles of the NLP well-formed outcome, she set clearer expectations with disorganized clients. Her strategies included arranging meetings in quiet offices with no distractions and holding videoconferences rather than visiting client sites. Her goal involved setting specific boundaries such as defining the start and end times of meetings and distributing the agenda in advance. Also, by fully itemizing the time spent and billing for every hour wasted — like those in the legal profession — she also had a direct impact on making others more efficient.

Initially, Kate's goal didn't appear to depend solely on her own actions and therefore, on the face of it, she may not have been able to satisfy it. By showing flexibility of behavior, however, she took responsibility for achieving her goal and influencing her clients with complete integrity.

Does the goal describe the evidence procedure?

This question is simply another way of asking, "How will I know that I've achieved my goal?" Here are some extremely important questions that can help to identify goals that are too vague, or when you're unclear on the outcome:

» How do I know that I'm getting the desired outcome?

» What will I be doing when I get it?

» What will I see, hear, and feel when I have it?

ANECDOTE David, an accountant, wanted to become self-employed. His only stated desire was to earn enough income within three months. By answering the preceding questions, he discovered that he hadn't really worked out what he truly wanted from working for himself. His initial goal, although stated in the positive, was too vague to help him get anywhere; it was as bad as saying, "I know I don't want to work for someone else" (a negative). Instead, he followed the well-formed outcome process and worked out that what he really wanted to do was to teach other self-employed accountants how to win business by training them in NLP-based sales techniques.

Is the context of the goal clearly defined?

Ask yourself, "Where, when, how, and with whom do I want to achieve my goal?" Answering this question helps you fine-tune what you want by eliminating what you don't want. For instance, you may want to work remotely as a digital nomad from anywhere in the world. However, if working from that rural cottage with spotty Wi-Fi is too isolating, you may refine your goal to explore coworking communities or digital nomad groups where connection is built in. By defining when you want something, you may in the process identify steps that need to be taken before you can have it. For instance, "I want my vacation home when I can afford to have someone else maintain it" may make you realize that you need a minimum income of $150,000 per year before you can afford your vacation retreat.

ANECDOTE When Kate coached Miguel, a small-company owner who wanted to expand his technology enterprise, his first desired outcome was to build a separate outbuilding for the business in the grounds of his house. As a result of questioning him about the context, his outcome changed to finding office premises away from the home. He realized just how much the business was intruding on family life.

The happy result was that his six-person team moved into luxury, purpose-built offices close to a university campus, at a low rent, which provided the space to grow the business. He and his wife regained the use of the two main rooms in their house with the bonus of quality leisure time without the hassle of "living above the shop."

Does the goal identify the necessary resources?

The following questions help to identify what you need, by way of people, knowledge and so on, to satisfy your outcome. They enable you to draw on possible past experiences when you previously made use of resources that may prove useful in the current exercise. To give you an idea of the sort of answers that can be helpful, we also list those that Peter (who wants to take up hang-gliding but is afraid of heights) would give to these questions:

>> **What resources do I have now?**

Peter: I have the desire to learn friends who are hang-gliders. I'm athletic and can easily pick up new sports. It can't be that different to water skiing!

>> **What resources do I need to acquire?**

Peter: I need to get over my fear of heights, so I'm going to find a therapist or hypnotherapist who can help me do so. I also need to find a club where I can hire an instructor and a hang-glider. I need to adjust my availability to make time for my new hobby.

>> **Have I evidence of achieving this type of goal before?**

Peter: Well, I learned to ski — and boy, was roaring down that first green run scary! I persevered, though, and I'm now a pro at tackling black runs.

>> **What happens if I act as if I have the resources?**

Peter: Oh, I can feel myself soaring, and I don't have those butterflies in my stomach when I look down. I never thought I could leave terra firma without metal below me. Can't wait to get soaring!

REMEMBER

Acting as if you have the resources now helps you to recognize and shift any beliefs that may be holding you back. It also enables you to try the outcome on for size — you may change your mind at this point. This approach is useful because it can save you spending money on equipment that may simply take up space in the garage if you later find that the new hobby isn't right for you.

Have I evaluated whether the goal is ecological?

One definition of *ecology* is a "branch of biology dealing with living organisms' habits, modes of life and relations to their surroundings." In NLP, when we talk

about *ecology checks*, we're simply asking questions to make sure that the outcome fits within all aspects of your life. Ecology checks shine a strong beam of light on any hidden agenda or secondary gain of which you may be unaware when setting your outcomes. A *secondary gain* or *positive byproduct* is defined as a behavior that appears to be negative or problem-causing for you or others when in fact it serves a positive function for you at some level.

The following questions form the laser-guided system that helps you lock on to the nub of your desires. As you ask yourself these questions, be aware of any pictures, sounds, and particularly feelings that your unconscious mind raises. Be sympathetic to the response you get and adjust your goal accordingly.

>> What is the *real* reason I want this?

>> What will I lose or gain if I get it?

>> What will happen if I get it?

>> What won't happen if I get it?

>> What will happen if I don't get it?

>> What won't happen if I don't get it?

ANECDOTE

In one of her career-coaching sessions, Kate encountered a client who was in a quandary. Raz was an average student and achieved good enough grades to go to university to study art. His real passion, however, was working with wood. Kate encouraged him to use the well-formed outcome process to clarify what to do with his future. He saw that he wanted to do something creative, and so an art degree was fine. He imagined himself at exhibitions, talking to people about his work. He knew he was creative and quite capable of reading around his subject, and so he had all the resources he needed. However, when it came to checking the ecology of going to university, he realized that he didn't want to spend years studying theory. He discovered that he really wanted to work alongside a furniture-maker and learn in a very practical way.

Does the goal identify the first step I need to take?

Lao-Tzu, the ancient Taoist philosopher, is credited with saying that a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step, which is well worth remembering. Often, change isn't of the dramatic breakthrough kind, but a drip, drip, drip effect — slowly getting what you want. You need to break down your action plan into concrete steps that will ultimately lead to your goal.

Staying motivated and taking consistent daily action

Goals matter: They keep you on track, making your desired outcomes achievable. In the past, you may have tried processes such as mind maps, to-do lists, or vision boards, and you may even have had some success with them. But did you enjoy the process, especially once the novelty wore off?

A powerful upgrade is Goal Mapping — a method for setting and achieving goals. It works by engaging your whole brain — left, right, and the bridge between — and your whole mind, with the conscious setting clear direction and the unconscious working quietly in the background to make it real. By uniting logic with imagination and instruction with emotion, Goal Mapping turns intention into achievement.

ANECDOTE

To illustrate how to create and use a Goal Map, we'll use the example of one of Romilla's clients, Olivia.

Olivia came for Breakthrough coaching, weighed down by financial pressures and in despair. Despite a good income and a stable job with strong prospects, all Olivia's waking moments were gripped by overwhelming anxiety about money — fixated on her bank balance and dreading daily bills. Her mind was locked in scarcity. The strain affected her concentration at work, leading to errors and missed deadlines, which only intensified her exhaustion.

During her first coaching session, Olivia identified two critical points:

» Paying off her primary credit card was the key to freeing up headspace so she could think clearly and begin building a process to regain control of her finances.

» Identifying an intervention that would help her shift her focus away from constant worry about money and toward creating a calmer, more empowered future.

These two insights became the foundation for Olivia's one-month Goal Map. Romilla kept it simple because Olivia was already overwhelmed. Olivia just needed to review her map twice a day for a month: once in the morning and once before bed, or whenever she felt herself panicking over money. This simple practice gave her a powerful tool to shift her strategy (see Chapter 12 for more on strategies) from obsessing over what she lacked to focusing on a future of abundance.

Having access to a coach gave Olivia more than just a Goal Map. It gave her

>> A renewed sense of hope that she could break out of scarcity and invite abundance.

>> Knowledge that she was supported and wasn't alone in facing her money fears; someone genuinely had her back.

>> A feeling of safety without judgment in a place where she could begin to dissolve the shame that had kept her trapped, silent, and unable to ask for help.

This support was essential to her sticking with the Goal Map. Without it, the map might have become just another piece of paper. With it, Olivia began to embed new habits and a new mindset, which opened the way to lasting change.

Goal Mapping isn't only for immediate relief. Typically, someone's goal map journey would start with them designing their Best Life Map and moving on to other core areas, as shown in the following list. Your wheel of life exercise can help to decide on the sequence for the Goal Maps you want to work on.

>> Best life
>> Relationships
>> Purpose
>> Happiness
>> Financial
>> Self-worth
>> Well-being

TIP

When creating any Goal Map, start with a blank form and use the steps described in the following sections to fill in the boxes.

Dream: What do you want?

This first step is where you set the vision — the big picture of the outcome you really want. Daydreaming is largely a right-brain activity, giving your imagination free rein to picture your goal in vivid detail: what you'll see, hear, and feel when it happens.

This is also where you set your intention — a clear signal that tells your unconscious mind what to focus on, like Olivia deciding to clear her credit card. The more vividly you imagine your goal — with clear intention, not just idle

daydreaming — the stronger the emotional resonance. That spark of positive feeling engages your unconscious and keeps you going when motivation dips.

Order: Which goal is your priority?

This is where you prioritize the goals you develop in the first step. This prioritization is primarily a left-brain activity, using logic and structure to organize your vision. For example, someone mapping their "best life" might include their ideal home, working conditions, income, and health. These go into the DREAM boxes: The main goal goes in the center, with four supporting goals around it.

As you prioritize, you express each goal as an affirmation in words for maximum impact, using the 6 P's in the nearby sidebar to make them clear, motivating, and memorable.

Read each affirmation out aloud, with feeling. Speaking engages more of your senses: You hear your own voice, you feel the words resonate in your body, and the emotion you add amplifies the energy. This makes the affirmation more believable to your unconscious mind, making it more achievable.

Draw: Create right-brain imagery

The next step is to add images in each frame of your goals to match your affirmations. Pictures reach the brain faster than words and touch more deeply at an emotional level. A single photo of a kitten, for example, can stir far more feeling than just reading the word *kitten*.

THE 6 P'S

When you're writing affirmations, keep in mind the 6 P's, six simple guidelines that make your statements powerful and effective:

- **Personal:** Use "I" or "we" (if you're working with another person).
- **Positive:** Focus on what you want, not what you don't want. (See "Becoming smarter than SMART: Creating well-formed outcomes" earlier in this chapter.)
- **Present:** Write it in the present tense as if it's already happening: "I am" or "I have."
- **Purposeful:** Use words that have meaning for you.
- **Passionate:** Add words that evoke a positive emotion in you.
- **Pronounced:** Emphasize key words by starting it with a capital letter.

To make your images truly powerful, choose ones that are personal and meaningful — family photos, selfies, or recognizable symbols from your life or business. The more the picture resonates with you, the stronger its emotional pull and the more naturally it draws your unconscious mind toward achieving your goal.

Why: Identify what motivates you

This step is all about uncovering the values and emotions that give your goals energy. The three why frames are powerful because they are based on your values (see Chapters 3 and 8): They connect your goal with what truly matters to you. The stronger the emotional connection, the greater the motivation. It's what keeps the goal alive long after the first burst of enthusiasm fades.

Unlike left-brained "to-do" words, your *why* statements should be rich with meaning and emotion. Instead of saying "get fit," you might write, "I love feeling strong and full of energy." The more emotive your reasons, the more naturally your unconscious mind will keep you focused and moving toward your goal. You can ask yourself, "What matters most to me about achieving this goal?" or "How will achieving it make me feel?"

Once you have expressed each "*why*" in words and are happy with them, you can proceed to adding the imagery into each frame.

When: Over what period of time

A goal without a time frame is just a wish. Setting a date focuses your mind and channels your energy. A target date sharpens focus; it keeps you moving forward instead of drifting.

Keep your timeline realistic. Too short and it causes frustration; too long and you risk losing momentum. And if you miss the date, you haven't failed; you've simply reset the clock and gained clarity on what still needs to be done.

In Olivia's Goal Map, there is a start date at the bottom of the map and an end date at the top.

How: What actions will be needed?

This step draws on your logical, left-brain thinking to identify the three key actions that will move you toward your goal. In Olivia's Goal Map, she worked with Romilla to track her insights, monitor her finances, and actively "work" her map.

Always begin with the action you can take first — place it on the bottom branch — and then build upward with the next steps, moving closer to your goal with each action. Once you have expressed each *how* in words and are happy with them, you can proceed to adding the imagery into each frame.

For more detailed planning, you can always expand your to-do list using whatever software or system works best for you.

Who: Whose help will you require?

"No man is an island," wrote John Donne. This applies to achieving goals. Trying to achieve a goal in isolation can be slow, tedious, and discouraging.

Ask yourself, "Who can help me reach this goal?" This might include a coach or mentor, a supportive organization, a mastermind group, colleagues, friends, or family. You can also choose a role model to emulate, whether a living person you admire, a leader in your field, or even a fictional character whose qualities inspire you.

Most importantly, ask yourself, "Who do I need to be in order to achieve my goal?" What characteristics do you need to develop or strengthen — focus, resilience, creativity, patience. Indeed, you may also need to discard some characteristics — procrastination, inconsistency, negative self-talk.

Once you have expressed each *who* in words and are happy with them, you can proceed to adding the imagery into each frame. See Figure 4-2 for Olivia's example Goal Map both without images and with them.

When your Goal Map is complete, print it and sign it as a commitment to yourself. Work with an accountability partner and check in regularly to strengthen commitment and keep momentum alive. Each day, take a moment to breathe deeply and center yourself as you look at your map. Last thing at night, let your eyes rest on the words and pictures, allowing your unconscious to process your desires and actions as you sleep. First thing in the morning, repeat the process to set your intention and prime your mind for a successful day. This simple rhythm of persistence — night and morning — keeps your goals alive in both mind and body, steadily drawing you toward the life you choose.

To find out more about Goal Mapping, please visit `https://online.goalmapping.com`.

FIGURE 4-2: Olivia's Goal Map with just the words (left) and both words and pictures (right).

2

Winning Friends and Influencing People

Notice more about the world around you and discover how to engage with it better.

Find out how to pick up on the subtle clues people reveal about themselves when they communicate.

Discover the value in hearing how people use words in different ways.

Master the skills of great communicators.

Chapter **5**

Seeing, Hearing, and Feeling Your Way to Better Communication

I n Chapter 1, we introduce you to the four main pillars of NLP. One of these upstanding elements is what NLP labels s*ensory awareness*, the ability to under-stand how people make meaning of the world and create their own reality through their senses.

Just for a minute, imagine a special creature with highly developed personal antennae. Well, actually that's you. You come tumbling into the world as a new human baby ready to discover all about your surroundings. Unless you're born with difficulties in some way, you arrive as a mini-learning machine, with eyes and ears, and a sense of smell, taste, and touch, plus that most distinctly human quality — the ability to experience an emotional connection with others.

As you develop, you form mental maps of the world and get into habits of thinking and behaving during childhood. You discover how to learn about the world in cer-tain ways that work best for you by looking at, touching, tasting, and smelling things, and hearing words.

NLP encourages you to become curious about how you form these mental maps. Understanding how you use your senses to represent your experience enables you to notice how your perceptions are shaped, thus influencing your ability to communicate with other people. It also enables you to recognize how and why you react to certain people and events and gives you the ability to control or modulate your reaction. Later in the chapter, you find out how awareness of other people's mental maps can help you to communicate more effectively to build greater rapport. NLP's focus on sensory awareness fits perfectly with the recent upsurge of interest in the concept of *mindfulness*, which advocates paying attention in the present moment without making any judgments about what you notice.

Ever heard the term "use it or lose it"? Your life experiences condition you to behave in a certain way, which can make you a bit lazy about learning. When you find that you're good at one way of doing things, that's the method you continue to use. So, assume that as a child you drew a picture, sang, or danced, and you enjoyed doing so and received positive reinforcement from a teacher. Clearly, you're most likely to concentrate more attention on that area in which you show promise to the detriment of other endeavors.

The same thing can happen with your sensory awareness. You get very good at using one method of thinking, processing, and sharing information in a particular context, until it becomes more natural to focus consciously on that one sense to the detriment of the others. You use your other senses, of course, but aren't consciously aware of them. For example, when you watch a film in vivid 3D, you may not be as aware of the soundtrack as the visual images in front of your eyes.

Leonardo da Vinci mused that the average human "looks without seeing, listens without hearing, touches without feeling, eats without tasting, moves without physical awareness, inhales without awareness of odor or fragrance, and talks without thinking." What an invitation for personal improvement!

In this chapter, we invite you to try out some new ways of engaging with the world, fine-tuning your incredible senses, and noticing what a difference doing so makes to your life. You can look forward to fun and self-discovery along the way.

Getting to Grips with the Senses

The NLP model describes the way that you experience the external world — which, by the way, is called real life — through your five senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste.

Notice what happens inside your head and body, for example, when we write, "Think about a delicious meal you've enjoyed." You may see a picture of the table spread with colorful dishes and hear the sound of knives and forks, a waiter telling you about today's specials, or a friend chatting in the kitchen. Perhaps you notice feeling a warm and pleasant anticipation as the aromas of food drift your way, you hear the uncorking of a bottle of wine, or feel a cool glass of water in your hand, and then you taste the first mouthful: a delicious, multisensory experience. And you're only thinking about it!

Until now, you may not have thought about *how* you think (the process), only *what* you think about (the content). However, the quality of your thinking determines the quality of your experience. So the *how* is just as important, if not more important, than the *what*.

This section introduces you to some dimensions of your thought processes that you may never have considered before. As you open up your own awareness of how you think and make sense of the world, some interesting things happen. You begin to notice that you can control how you think about a person or situation. You also realize that not everybody thinks like you do about even the most mundane, everyday events, which seem so clear and obvious to you. You may well decide that life can be more rewarding when you begin to think differently by paying attention to different senses.

MASTERING YOUR MIND

In her book, *Sane New World* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), comedian Ruby Wax offers an honest account of her experience of living with depression and describes her journey as she learns how to self-regulate her moods and emotions. She describes her depression in kinesthetic terms, as "being a corpse, no sense of skin or other extremities, like fingers or legs. I'm this empty thing . . . everything is nothingness."

Ruby was so motivated to overcome her illness that she went on to study mindfulness, neuroscience, and psychotherapy at leading institutions. She has changed her "identity" from comedian and Shakespearean actor to become a well-respected academic and mindfulness-based cognitive therapist and author. She has been recognized for her pioneering services to mental health. She has recently added several new books to her repertoire, including *A Mindfulness Guide for Survival* (Headline Welbeck Non-Fiction, 2021).

She argues that we're obsessed with staying busy as a distraction from life's bigger, philosophical questions that we find it hard to answer, such as what we really should

(continued)

be doing with our limited time on earth. When we're busy, we gain status and feel important, yet we lose touch with what really makes us happy. With a career in television, Ruby got caught up in the addiction to fame, speed, and the desire to do and have more; she suffered a real sense of shame and vulnerability as her popularity waned.

Ruby learned to recognize the tipping point from being on a high when she was creative and productive to burning out as a result of excess activity focused on success. In learning mindfulness, she discovered an antidote to the harmful build-up of the hormone cortisol that can sweep her into depression. Mindful practices that engage all the senses bring her back to a calm baseline and enable her to spot the early warning signs of overdoing things; they sharpen her focus and allow her to maintain a healthy mental state. NLP would equate mindfulness to being fully "in time" in the present (see Chapter 13) and engaging all your senses.

Filtering reality

As you experience reality, you selectively filter information from your environment in three broad ways, known in NLP as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, or VAK for short (or VAKOG if you include the olfactory and gustatory aspects):

>> **Visual dimension:** Some people see clear *pictures* of the *sights*.

>> **Auditory dimension:** Other people tune in to *hear* the *sounds*.

>> **Kinesthetic dimension:** A third group grasps the *emotional* aspects or *touch* — they experience a *body awareness*. For our purposes we include in this group the sense of smell (olfactory) and taste (gustatory).

Think for a moment about the way you experience using this *For Dummies* book. Everybody who picks it up notices the look, sound, and feel of it in different ways. Take three individual readers. The first one chooses the book because they like how the friendly layout and amusing art look. The second likes the sound of what's said and discussed in the text. The third enjoys the feel or smell of the paper or has a gut feeling that this book is interesting to get hold of. It's most likely that you experience the book as a mix of all three senses.

Check it out for yourself. As you use this book, start to notice how you prefer to take in information. Begin to check which pages make you sit up and pay attention. What works best for you? Are you most influenced by the words, the pictures, or the feel of the pages?

In everyday life, you naturally access all your VAK senses. However, in any particular context, especially when you're feeling stressed, one sense may be dominant. As you become more sensitive to the three broad groupings of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic at work and play, we promise that you're going to benefit from this exercise.

Imagine, for example, that you want to change a room in your home. You may have been thinking about this task in purely visual terms — what paint colors to choose or what patterns for the fabrics. If you begin to engage in the auditory dimension, you may think about the sounds of objects in the room, the squeaky floorboards, the music or conversations you want to take place, and how to cut out the noise of the external traffic or let in the birdsong. Or what happens if you consider this space in terms of textures — the kinesthetic dimension? Perhaps then you choose a plush, velvety carpet or rush matting. You may expose some brickwork or prefer a new, smooth plaster finish on the walls, depending on the feel that appeals to you.

In the context of learning, when you know about VAK, you can start to experiment with different ways of taking in information. Say that in the past, you've studied a language by listening to CDs in your car. Perhaps now you may make faster progress by watching films or plays in that language, or by playing a sport, sharing a meal, or learning a dance routine with native speakers of that language. When people discover how to develop their abilities to access pictures, words, and feelings, they often discover talents of which they were previously unaware.

ANECDOTE

When Kirsty began to learn Italian from her friend Paola in Abruzzo, she initially wanted to see everything written down in order to remember what she'd heard spoken, and she felt she had to learn the vocabulary by rote. Paola encouraged her to relax on a comfortable sofa after each lesson, listen to what she'd practiced earlier, and allow the words to sink in naturally. This approach saved Kirsty from getting anxious about how she was going to remember everything and made the experience fun.

As a teacher who has studied NLP, Paola recognizes two important things: Pupils learn best when in a resourceful state; and all pupils have their own natural learning style. Utilizing the key visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses can speed up learning, as you can discover when working with online language programs like Duolingo.

TECHNICAL STUFF

A *resourceful state* is one in which you're able to be open and curious to learn, as well as able to access all the resources you need to solve any problem you're dealing with. The resources you access may be internal — such as your natural attribute of a desire to learn — or external — including other people or technical

gadgets. In a resourceful state, you have a sense that you're behaving "at cause," where you have choices, rather than "at effect," where you feel powerless and that life is something being done to you.

In "NLP-speak," the different channels through which humans represent or code information internally using their senses are known as the *representational systems* (rep systems), also called the *modalities*. (In NLP, speaking about the visual modality is the equivalent of speaking of the visual representational system.) You can also hear NLPers talk about VAK preferences or preferred thinking styles. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic make up the main representational systems. The *submodalities* are the characteristics of each representational system, such as color and brightness (visual), pitch and tone (auditory), and pressure and temperature (kinesthetic).

The sensory-specific words (such as *picture*, *word*, *feeling*, *smell*, or *taste*) that we employ — whether they're nouns, verbs, or adjectives — are called the *predicates*. More examples of these predicates are given in Table 5-1, which you can find in the later section "Building rapport through words."

Hearing how people are thinking

Human beings naturally blend a rich and heady mix of the VAK dimensions, and yet people tend to prefer one modality over the others.

How do you decide whether you or others prefer the visual, auditory, or kinesthetic dimension? To discover more about your primary modality, try out the following fun quiz on yourself and with friends and colleagues. We don't claim that the test's scientific, but it takes only a couple of minutes to do:

1. **For each of the following statements, circle the option that best describes you.**

   1. *I make important decisions based on:*

      a. Following my gut feelings

      b. The options that sound best

      c. What looks right to me

   2. *When I attend a meeting or presentation, I consider it successful when people have:*

      a. Illustrated the key points clearly

      b. Articulated a sound argument

      c. Grasped the real issues

3. *People know when I'm having a good or bad day by:*

    a. The way I dress and look

    b. The thoughts and feelings I share

    c. The tone of my voice

4. *If I have a disagreement, I'm most influenced by:*

    a. The sound of the other person's voice

    b. How that person looks at me

    c. Connecting with that person's feelings

5. *I'm very aware of:*

    a. The sounds and noises around me

    b. The touch of different clothes on my body

    c. The colors and shapes in my surroundings

2. **Circle your preferred responses for each question in the following grid.**

1a K	2a V	3a V	4a A	5a A
1b A	2b A	3b K	4b V	5b K
1c V	2c K	3c A	4c K	5c V

3. **Add up how many V's, A's, and K's you got.**

Did you get mainly V, A, or K, or was your total evenly mixed? Use the following descriptions to check your preferences and see whether our explanations make sense to you:

» **V — visual:** A visual preference may mean that you're able to see your way clearly, keep an eye on things, and take a long-term view. You may enjoy visual images, design, watching sports, and the symbols involved in studying physics, math, or chemistry. You may need to live or work in an attractively designed environment. Fashion, art, or interior design may interest you.

» **A — auditory:** An auditory preference may mean that you're able to tune into new ideas, maintain harmonious relationships, and are happy to sound people out and listen to the opinions of others. You may enjoy music, drama, writing, speaking, and literature. You may be highly tuned into the sound levels in your environment.

>> **K — kinesthetic:** A kinesthetic preference may mean that you're able to get to grips with new trends, keep a balance, and hold on tight to reality. You may enjoy contact sports, athletics, climbing, and working with materials. You may work in electronics, manufacturing, hairdressing, or construction. You may be sensitive to the textures of your environment and like the feel of touching the screen on your phone or the keys of your computer.

Researchers estimate that visual is the dominant style for approximately 60 percent of the populations of the United Kingdom and the United States, which is hardly surprising given the daily bombardment of our visual senses.

REMEMBER

Beware of labeling people as visuals, auditories, or kinesthetics — a gross generalization. Instead, think of people as having a preference or habitual behavior in a particular context, rather than identities. Be mindful, too, that no one system is better or worse than any other. (You can't help but operate in all the different modes, even if this happens unconsciously.) The systems are simply different ways of taking in, processing and outputting information as you experience the world around you. After all, everyone's unique.

Listening to the World of Words

The notion of sensory awareness isn't new and dates back at least to the days of the Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who talked about the senses in his book *On The Soul*. The nineteenth-century psychologist William James was the first to discuss the primacy of modalities, which NLP refers to as the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic representational systems (check out the earlier section "Getting to Grips with the Senses").

In the early days of NLP, the founders, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, became fascinated by how people used language in different ways. The whole NLP notion of modalities emerged from their seminars and study groups when they identified patterns of speech linked to the VAK senses. People represent their experience through their senses, and so NLP came to call the senses representational systems (or modalities).

The representational systems are much more than information channels via the eyes, ears, or hands. The term refers to a whole complex system of activity that includes input, processing, storage, retrieval, and output.

For example, you may take in information through your eyes — such as the image of a favorite person's face — and mentally process that information, store it for the future, retrieve the memory of it the next time you're feeling a bit blue, and say to yourself, "Never mind. Things will look better tomorrow." All of this happens outside of your conscious awareness.

The everyday language that you use provides clues to your preferred representational system — the one that you've developed through your life. To enhance your communication skills, listen to the types of words that people use and ask yourself whether these words are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or neutral (not sensory-specific). You can find all sorts of clever clues about what's going on inside people's heads, and whether they're more responsive to pictures, words, or sounds. You can then go on to note what kind of language gets you the best response from a particular person.

Taking a glimpse into the world of synesthesia

Synesthesia happens when one sense causes another sense to also be stimulated. Neil Harbisson explains synesthesia brilliantly in his TED talk in which he explains how "listening to color" has changed his life. Neil was born with achromatopsia, which meant he lived in a "black, white, and grayscale world." He collaborated in developing an electronic eye (which he calls an "eyeborg") that's a color sensor. It sends color frequencies to a chip in the back of his head, which allows him to hear different frequencies. He says, "Life has changed dramatically since I hear color because it is almost everywhere." For him, going to an art gallery is like going to a concert hall. Now he dresses according to colors that sound good to him and arranges his food on a plate to eat his favorite song. In order to enrich his life, Neil created a synesthesia of color and sound, albeit artificially induced to begin with.

ANECDOTE

Now you may be thinking, "That's all very interesting, but how can I put this information to use?" Following is a short extract from a session in which Romilla used this technique to help a client. Marleen was so stressed that her performance at work was being affected and she was afraid she was going to lose her job. Marleen had had problems as a child, which left her very sensitive to the emotions and facial expressions of the people around her. She worked in a department in which she fit well and felt safe — until the arrival of a new boss. He wasn't the most sensitive person, and the people who worked for him felt bullied.

During her coaching session, Marleen realized that she started to feel stressed as soon as she stepped through the door and into the open-plan office. She'd see the tension on her colleagues' faces and immediately feel stressed — a negative visual/kinesthetic synesthesia.

> Romilla: So Marleen, what happens when you're stressed?
>
> Marleen: I find it hard to breathe, and it feels like someone is squeezing my chest. I can't think straight. [Marleen clenched her fist at the level of her solar plexus to demonstrate how she felt]
>
> Romilla: You've often talked about how wonderful you felt when you walked along the beach in Ibiza. Now, picture yourself walking along the beach, and as you see yourself in the picture, what do you feel now?
>
> Marleen: [Takes a deep breath and her face and body visibly relax] I can breathe again, and my mind is clear. Oh! And I can feel the sand between my toes. Oh, and the waves, they're so loud.

Romilla helped Marleen create a positive visual/kinesthetic synesthesia between seeing herself on the beach and feeling relaxed. Marleen's mind then connected the auditory and kinesthetic modalities.

Building rapport through words

In our training sessions, we often test out the method of representational systems and observe how easily and quickly groups with the same preferences can build rapport. Such people find that communicating with those who "speak their language" is naturally easier.

So what can you do when you feel that you're speaking a "different" language, and the conversation is harder? Begin by listening more carefully and identifying other people's language preference. Then you're in a great position to adjust your language pattern so that it aligns with those around you; therefore, you build rapport through the similarity of your language pattern.

Table 5-1 lists some of the sensory-specific words and phrases — the VAK predicates mentioned in the earlier section "Filtering reality" — that you hear people say. You can start to build your own lists and notice which words you say or write frequently. When you have difficulty getting through to certain people, check whether you're stuck in a rut with your own language.

TABLE 5-1   **VAK Words and Phrases**

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Bright, blank, clear, color, dim, focus, graphics, illuminate, insight, luminous, perspective, vision	Argue, ask, deaf, discuss, loud, harmony, melody, outspoken, question, resonate, say, shout, shrill, sing, tell, tone, utter, vocal, yell	Cold, bounce, exciting, feel, firm, flow, grasp, movement, pushy, solid, snap, touch, trample, weight
It looks like. . .	It sounds like. . .	It feels like. . .
A glimpse of reality	So you say	We reshaped the work
We looked after our interests	I heard it from his own lips	Moving through
This is a new way of seeing the world	Who's calling the tune?	It hit home
Now look here	Clear as a bell	Get a feel for it
This is clear cut	Important to ask me	Get to grips with
Sight for sore eyes	Word for word	Pain in the neck
I see what you mean	We're on the same wavelength	Solid as a rock
Tunnel vision	Tune into this	Take it one step at a time
Appears as if. . .	Music to my ears	Driving an organization
What a bright day	That strikes a chord	The pressure's on

You can add olfactory and gustatory words into the mix, such as the following: fragrant, fresh, juicy, odor, pungent, salty, smell, smoky, sour, spicy, sweet, and whiff.

Many words in your vocabulary don't have any link to the senses. These words are nonsensory, and because they're "neutral," you neither connect nor disconnect with somebody else's modality. Neutral words include the following: analyze, answer, ask, choose, communicate, complex, educate, experience, favorite, imagine, learn, question, remember, transform, think, understand, use, and wonder.

When people's thoughts and words are highly logical, conceptual, and devoid of sensory language, NLP calls this style *digital processing*. Documents from insurance companies are typical of digital language, as in the following example: "The obligation to provide this information continues up to the time that there is a completed contract of insurance. Failure to do so entitles the Underwriters, if they so wish, to avoid the contract of insurance from inception and so enables them to repudiate liability."

RICH OR DIGITAL?

In any walk of life, people develop their own shorthand style of language with colleagues, friends, and family. Listen to a group of doctors, teenagers, or builders; they have their own way of getting the message across quickly and efficiently.

Speaking from personal experience, we can safely generalize that many businesspeople, and especially those who work in the IT industry, stay highly tuned into their digital style of language. Surrounded by logical technology, they forget how to put any sensory-specific language into their communication (until they discover NLP, of course!).

Communication issues arise for any group of people when they step outside their peer group. All too often, corporate-speak sends people to sleep. Just contrast the average script of a "Death by PowerPoint" presentation in corporations across the globe with the inspired "I Have a Dream" speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., and you soon see why so many executives power nap in front of their laptops in the afternoons.

The solution lies in passion. When people live their passion and want to share it with the world, they naturally engage all their senses, and this reality is reflected in the words they speak. If you analyze the speeches of Barack Obama or Winston Churchill, or the narration from a TV series by world-renowned naturalist David Attenborough, you notice the richness and use of sensory-specific words in their speech.

Bringing on the translators

Two people can sometimes struggle to communicate, despite sharing similar viewpoints, because they speak with different language styles. One may use an auditory style, for example, and another a visual or kinesthetic style. To be an effective communicator, you need to be able to do two things: know your own preferred style or modality and also practice using other ones.

Have you ever heard a dispute that goes something like the following one between a manager and a team member in the office? To demonstrate the different language styles, we show the predicates (the sensory-specific words and expressions) in italics:

Manager (Anh): I can't *see* your point of *view* about your appraisal (visual).

Employee (Guillermo): Well, can we *talk* about it further (auditory)?

Anh: It's perfectly *clear* to me — just *black and white* (visual).

Guillermo: If you would *discuss* it, it may be more *harmonious* around here (auditory).

Anh: Just have a closer *look*. I'm sure you'll get a better *perspective* (visual).

Guillermo: You never *listen*, do you? End of *conversation* (auditory).

Anh, the manager, stays with visual language, and the employee, Guillermo, is stuck in auditory mode: They're disconnected and not making progress.

Here's how a third person — maybe Daniel from human resources or another department — can help to resolve the dispute:

1. Daniel sums up the situation in visual mode to Anh and auditory mode to Guillermo.

   The conversation goes something like this:

   "So, Anh, it looks like you have a *clear picture* of the situation (visual). And Guillermo, you've still got some important questions to *talk through*" (auditory). (Heads nod in agreement.)

2. Then Daniel shifts into the third system (kinesthetic), which is neutral ground for both arguing parties.

   "You both want to *get this moving* and *off the agenda*. So how about we all *kick around the stumbling blocks* for an hour in my office, *reshape* the problem, and finally *put it to bed*."

NLP suggests that everyone has the capacity to develop their sensory representational systems by simply moving their bodies or turning off the mobile phone to see what's going on around them.

As with any system, making a change in one part causes an effect elsewhere, and that change begins by paying attention to what's happening around you.

READ MY LIPS

ANECDOTE

When one sensory system is impaired — such as sight or hearing — other senses are heightened. However, environmental factors can make it difficult for the deaf or blind person: Remember they are not slow, but actually very focused on the challenge. British deaf actress Rose Ayling Ellis brought TV audience to tears by her incredible winning dance performance in the TV show *Strictly Come Dancing* when the music went silent and she continued to dance. More recently her leading role

(continued)

in a crime drama *Code of Silence* showed that lip reading is immensely skillful and valuable in crime detection. She says that the French accent is hardest to decipher and that men mumble too much. Lipreading is about putting together clues and deciphering the evidence. Several words have the exact same lip patterns: "I love you" can be mistaken for "elephants" or "colorful." At the theater or in groups, deaf people will struggle to lip read because it's often hard to see people's lips close enough.

Acknowledging the Importance of the Eyes

Body language offers wonderful clues to people's preferred representational systems. How they breathe, stand, and move; their tone of voice; and tempo of speaking all tend to vary according to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic styles. In particular, in the early days of NLP, Bandler and Grinder observed that people move their eyes in systematic directions depending on which modality they're accessing. These movements are called *eye-accessing cues.*

Therefore, when people move their eyes in response to a question, you can pretty much work out whether they're accessing pictures, sounds, or feelings. Why is noticing these movements helpful, you may wonder? The answer is that doing so gives you a good chance of knowing, even without them uttering a word, which system they're going to use and how you can talk to them in a way that makes them respond positively to you. Table 5-2 outlines what eye movements are associated with which modality.

TABLE 5-2   **Accessing Cues**

Pattern	Eyes Move to the Subject's	What's Happening Inside	Sample of Language
Visual constructed	Top right	Seeing new or different images	Think of an elephant covered in pink icing
Visual remembered	Top left	Seeing images seen before	Think of your partner's face
Visual	Blank stare ahead	Seeing either new or old images	See what's important
Auditory constructed	Center right	Hearing new or different sounds	Listen to the sound of your name backward
Auditory remembered	Center left	Remembering sounds heard before	Hear your own doorbell ring

Pattern	Eyes Move to the Subject's	What's Happening Inside	Sample of Language
Auditory internal dialogue	Bottom left	Talking to yourself	Ask yourself what you want
Kinesthetic	Bottom right	Feelings, emotions, sense of touch	Notice the temperature of your toes

TIP

Figure 5-1 shows the kind of processing that most people do when they move their eyes in a particular direction. A small percentage of the population, including about half of all left-handers, are reversed — their eye movements are the mirror image of those shown.

V^c
Visual constructed

V^r
Visual remembered

A^c
Auditory constructed

A^r
Auditory remembered

K
Kinesthetic

A_d
Auditory (internal) dialogue
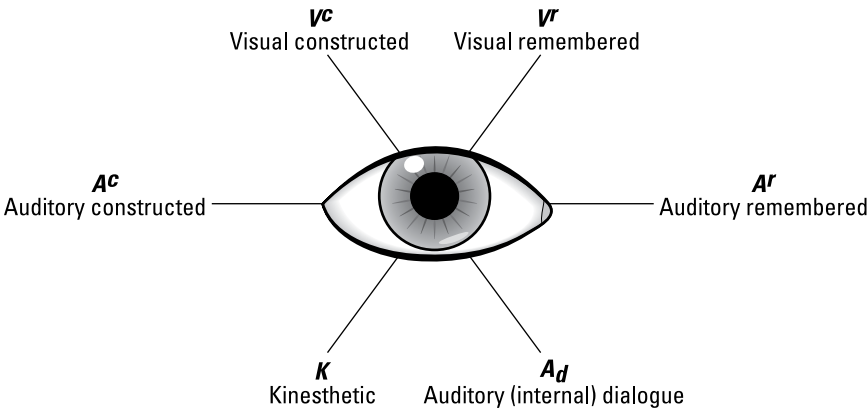
FIGURE 5-1:
Eye-accessing cues.

The illustration in Figure 5-1 is drawn as if you're looking at someone else's face and shows how you see their eyes move. So, for example, if the eyes are moving up and to your right into the *visual remembered* position, your own eyes would be shifting up and to your left if you're trying it out on yourself in a mirror.

SPOTTING THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF A LIAR

How good are you at spotting a liar? You may believe that you're totally clued in and can see instinctively when someone's fibbing, but numerous scientific studies over the last 30 years show that most people can only guess when someone is telling little white lies. Indeed, people can even be duped by the most outrageous untruths.

(continued)

Years of research by Paul Ekman, world-respected for his studies into emotions, reveal that the secret lies hidden in our microexpressions. Some 42 different muscles move in a person's face to create thousands of different microexpressions. These expressions change all the time in all sorts of subtle ways — so subtle, in fact, that if you can discover how to focus and catch these superfast movements, you have all the information you need to spot the liars.

The trouble is that, with so many possibilities, any human being has difficulty registering the discrepancies that show a false emotion — a lie. Even the latest generation of machines can't read these expressions correctly all the time. So who can accurately pick out the naughty tricksters? Ekman's research rates the star performers as members of the U.S. Secret Service, prison inmates, and a Tibetan Buddhist monk.

You'd expect Secret Service agents to be highly trained to spot dangerous suspects, and prisoners live in an environment filled with people experienced in crime and deception, and they need to distinguish who to trust in order to survive. Meanwhile, Ekman's Buddhist subject had none of these life experiences, but had spent thousands of hours meditating and appeared to have the sensitivity to read other people's emotions very accurately from their fleeting facial expressions.

By developing your sensory awareness — spotting those little details — you can become more attuned to how people may be thinking at different times. When you know this information, you can select your words so that others listen to you.

TRY THIS

In this exercise, your aim is to notice how people's eyes move so that you can cali-brate them and decide whether they're thinking in pictures, sounds or feelings. Find a willing friend, and then use the instructions, questions, and diagrams on the Eye Movements Game sheet in Figure 5-2. Each statement on this game sheet is phrased to engage with the senses — in the past or future. Follow these steps:

1. **Get your friend to think about something neutral so that you can check what their face looks like in a neutral state.**

   Doing the dishes or sock-sorting may be a pretty safe and mundane subject to suggest.

2. **State one instruction or question at a time from the Eye Movements Game sheet. As you do so, pay full attention to your friend's eyes.**

3. **Pencil in arrows on Figure 5-2 to record the direction in which your friend's eyes move.**

Your arrow marks should match up with the positions on the eye-accessing cues (shown in the earlier Figure 5-1, in the "Acknowledging the Importance of the eyes" section), so that they move to top, center, or lower positions and to the left or the right. When you've recorded your friend's eye movements, see whether their eyes go to the position that you expect based on the eye-accessing cue pattern outlined in Table 5-2.

Eye Movements Game

1. What does the your local meterologist look like on TV?

2. What do you see when you wake up in the morning?

3. Picture a pink elephant.

4. A circle fills a triangle; how many shapes are there?

5. Remember the sound of a car horn.

6. What are the first words you said today?

7. Imagine Donald Duck saying your name and address.

8. What do you say to yourself when you've made a silly mistake?

9. How hot do you like the water when you take a shower?

10. What is the sensation of crumbs of food in your bed?

FIGURE 5-2:
The Eye Movements Game sheet.

Making the VAK System Work for You

When you become aware of the VAK dimensions (which we describe in the earlier section "Filtering reality"), life becomes more interesting. Here are some ideas on how you can pull this technique out of your new toolkit and use it to your advantage:

» **Influencing a meeting, training session, or presentation.** Remember that when you speak to a group of people (in person or online), they all have a preference for how they take in information, and you don't know what that is. Unfortunately, people don't have a label on their foreheads to inform you about what they want to know and how they want to receive it — give me the picture, tell me the words, share your feelings about this subject. So, you need to ensure that you connect with each and every person in the room by presenting your ideas using a variety of media. Vary your presenting style and aids to address all styles with pictures, sounds, and feeling.

» **Making home projects fun for all.** Recognize that each family member has a different way of thinking about a major project. Perhaps you want to extend the house, redecorate a room, or redesign the garden. Not everybody wants to spend hours talking it through, having discussions that stretch late into the night. Your partner may want to pore over the drawing or capture ideas on a Pinterest board, whereas your children are motivated by the chance to dig in and get their hands dirty with paint or earth.

» **Developing your goals so that they're more real for yourself.** When you set goals in your personal or professional life, they come alive if you use all your senses effectively as described in Chapter 4. Think of what the goals look, sound, and feel like when you've achieved them and at every step along the way. NLPers get proficient at imagining all the fine details of their future experiences. Therefore, if you want to motivate someone (or yourself) to leave their comfort zone, help them to explore what things may look like when the task is complete and the hard work done.

» **Helping children to learn better.** Thank goodness education has changed dramatically since we were at school, and teachers now recognize that pupils learn in different ways. As parents and/or teachers, you can support children to understand how they learn at their best — and appreciate that the method may be different from the way you were taught or prefer to learn. Visual learners benefit from video, pictures, wall displays, and diagrams. Auditory learners need to hear what they're learning — through podcasts, discussions, lectures, and music. Kinesthetic learners benefit from practical sessions and

role playing: They prefer a "hands-on" approach. Teachers of groups of pupils who provide a multisensory approach cater for all styles. Children may be labelled as "slow" when in fact the dominant teaching style doesn't fit with their preferred way of learning. All these principles apply to adult learners, too.

>> **Increasing the impact of the written word.** When you put words to screen — from a blog post, job description to a customer proposal, charity letter, product advertisement, or article for your local community newsletter — you need to broaden your vocabulary to cover all the representational systems. To appeal to every reader, select words that include all three dimensions.

>> **Connecting with clients and colleagues.** You may never get to meet some of your clients or colleagues in person but connect remotely via Teams or Zoom. Make a note of the kind of language you encounter in messages, documents, and conversations — can you spot visual, auditory, or kinesthetic language? As you become aware of patterns, phrase your responses to match their preference.

TRY THIS

FOCUSING ON ONE SENSE A DAY

While reading this chapter, you may have become more curious about yourself and those with whom you spend time — how you and they think and experience life. To enhance your skills further, you can explore your senses in different ways, for example being mindful of a particular sense each day. Aim to identify three new things you hadn't been consciously aware of in the past.

Perhaps you can make today an olfactory day, when you pay attention to every fragrance, smell, and aroma. Or a visual day, when you switch off the music and focus on sights, shapes, and pictures — really see what's around you. A touch day can be fun, when you feel the surrounding textures or get in touch with your feelings at regular points in the day.

If you're a creature of habit who takes the dog for a walk every morning, spends hours on your phone or computer, or drives the same route every day, notice what changes for you when you pay attention to just one sense at a time.

Chapter **6**

Creating Rapport

R
apport sits at the heart of NLP as a central pillar, or essential ingredient, which leads to successful communication between two individuals or groups of people. It's the foundation for any successful relationship. *Rapport* is a mutually respectful way of being with others, whether in a social or business setting.

You don't need to like people to build rapport with them. Also, rapport isn't a technique that you turn on and off at will but something that should flow constantly between people.

It's important to be clear about *why* you're building rapport. If your aim is to build rapport to manipulate someone purely for your own gain, you're likely to trigger their internal warning system. Most people can sense insincerity on some level, even if they can't put their finger on exactly what's wrong. The moment that suspicion arises, rapport is lost.

Rapport is like money: You realize that you have a problem only when you don't have enough of it. The first rule of communication is to establish rapport before expecting anyone to listen to you. And this rule applies to everybody and in every situation, whether you're a teacher, pupil, spouse, friend, waitress, taxi driver, coach, doctor, therapist, or business executive.

Don't kid yourself that you can pull rapport out of the bag on the spur of the moment for a particular meeting, conversation, or problem-solving session. True rapport is based on an instinctive sense of trust and integrity. This chapter helps

you to spot situations when you do (and don't) have rapport with another person. We share some special NLP tools and ideas to enable you to build rapport and encourage you to do so with people where it may prove valuable for you in a way that respects all interests.

Knowing Why Rapport Is Important

The word *rapport* derives from the French verb *rapporter*, which means "to return or bring back." The English dictionary definition is "a sympathetic relationship or understanding." Rapport is about making a two-way connection. You know that you've made such a connection when you experience a genuine sense of trust and respect with another person, when you engage comfortably with someone no matter how different the two of you are, and when you know that you're listening and being listened to.

Although you may want to spend your time with people who are just like you, the world is full of a huge variety of different types of people to meet, all with special skills, opinions, and backgrounds. Rapport is the key to success and influence in both your personal and professional life because it's about appreciating and working with differences. Rapport simplifies getting things done and allows you to provide good customer service to others and enjoy being on the receiving end of it, too.

Neuroscientists have shown that the ability to relate to people is essential if you're to shift from a "survival" mode of operation to actively thriving: Rapport releases your brain power to think openly and creatively. Ultimately, rapport preserves your time, money, and energy. What a great stress-free way to live!

ANECDOTE

IS ANYONE IN?

Do you ever meet new people and then forget their names almost immediately? Your intention is to concentrate, yet you find yourself losing focus. Or perhaps you say good morning to your colleagues but don't have time to look them in the face.

Robert Dilts describes how the members of a West African tribe greet each other:

Person A says: I see you [name].

Person B replies: I'm here. I see you [name].

Person A replies: I'm here.

Try this approach with a friend who's willing to play! It just takes a few seconds longer than saying, "Hi there, mate" or "Morning!" and has the effect of making you concentrate on that other person and make a genuine connection. Greeting someone in this way means that you'll be present, mindful, and demonstrating your respect — essential rapport-building behaviors.

Recognizing rapport when you see it

You can't take a magic pill to acquire rapport instantly; it's something you develop intuitively. So, to understand how you personally build rapport and what's important to you in different relationships, carry out the following steps:

1. **Think for a moment about someone with whom you have rapport.**

   What signals do you send out to that person and receive back that allow you to know that you're on the same wavelength? How do you create and maintain your rapport?

2. **Think for a moment about someone with whom you don't have rapport but would like to.**

   What signals do you send out to that person and receive back that allow you to know that you're not on the same wavelength? What gets in the way of creating and maintaining rapport with that person?

3. **Think about your experience of the first person.**

   What can you do differently in your behavior with the second person to help you build a stronger relationship?

You may think that the first person (with whom you have rapport) is simply easy to get on with and the second (with whom you share no rapport yet) is just a difficult person. However, by being more flexible in your behavior toward and your thoughts about the second person, you may find that you can build rapport through some simple actions.

REMEMBER

You need to take time to get to know people and what's important to them instead of expecting people to adapt to you and your style. Throughout this chapter, we provide tips for doing just that.

Identifying people with whom you want to build rapport

By now, you may be getting curious about the people around you — those with whom you work, share a home, or socialize. Perhaps you want to get to know some

key individuals better, such as the manager of a project or your new partner's family. Maybe you want to influence your bank manager or the recruiter at that all-important job interview.

In this section, we provide a template to help you think about anyone with whom you desire better rapport. We ask you to write down your ideas to make you stop and think, and so that you can come back to revisit your notes at a future date. Good relationships take serious investment — time to build and nurture. You can see that the questions require you to think about your needs and those of the other person. Rapport is a two-way street.

> Name:
>
> Company/group:
>
> What is your relationship to this person?
>
> Specifically, how would you like your relationship with this person to change?
>
> What impact would this change have on you?
>
> What impact would this change have on the other person?
>
> Is the change worth investing time and energy in?
>
> What pressures does this person face?
>
> What's most important to the person right now?
>
> Who do you know that you can talk to who has successfully built rapport with this person? And what can you discover from this other person?
>
> What other help can you get to build rapport?
>
> What ideas do you have now for moving this relationship forward?
>
> What's the first step?

TIP Sometimes you have limited information about the intended person. If so, use this situation as your prompt to go out and do your research. Get curious about what makes that person tick, and who can help you find the information you need. Maybe you have a friend or colleague in common who you can identify with the help of a social networking site such as Facebook or LinkedIn.

WHEN RAPPORT REALLY MATTERS

Fast-moving businesses breed stressful working conditions. Take the frenetic world of advertising: highly competitive, new young teams, artistic temperaments, large budgets, and crazy deadlines. In an industry in which people frequently work all night, mistakes are bound to happen.

In advertising agencies all across the country, you can be certain that a number of client problems are brewing at any one time. Media, whether print or digital, appears on executives' desks the world over, and what happens when your client's advertisement from last week's issue appears in place of this week's new message? All too often, anxious calls fly back and forth across the airwaves when the wrong ad appears and files go astray, and computers crash mysteriously taking with them the latest version of an important design.

One of our advertising friends once produced a customer magazine for a corporate client in which some of the main photographs appeared in black and white; they should have been in color. In a hurry, he hadn't checked the proofs carefully. When the print was delivered, he called the client, confessed the error, apologized, and took full responsibility for a costly mistake. As he owned the agency, he knew that if he had to pay for the reprint, the bill for several thousand dollars would come straight out of his own profits.

At the other end of the phone, the young marketing executive's first reaction on hearing of the error was that the whole job would have to be reprinted; she'd discuss it with her boss and get back to him.

Within an hour, the client called back to say that her boss's reaction was that it was a genuine mistake. Because of the good working relationship that existed between the ad agency and the company, he'd accept the magazine and let it be released. The boss had remembered the times when our friend had gone beyond the call of duty to respond on the weekend and late in the evening, so that the client achieved a product launch on time. The boss also valued the time he'd taken to understand the company's business, plus the advice and experience he'd shared on using budgets wisely.

And what's the moral of the story? Simply that investing time in building the right relationships is just as valuable as getting the job done.

Introducing Basic Techniques for Building Rapport

Having rapport as the foundation for any relationship means that, when tough issues arise, you can more easily discuss them, find solutions, and move on. Fortunately, you can find out how to develop rapport.

Rapport happens at many levels, and you can build rapport constantly through the following:

>> The places and people you spend time with

>> The way you look, sound, and behave

>> The skills you develop

>> The values you live by

>> Your beliefs

>> Your purpose in life

>> Being true to your natural identity

ANECDOTE

Kate's coaching client, a junior doctor, was suffering from anxiety after working nonstop during the COVID-19 pandemic. He negotiated shorter working hours to allow him one extra day off each week to regain his equilibrium and enrolled at a community college to study ceramics. It wasn't just the course that enabled him to gain a different perspective on life.

"I found myself paying attention to the wide range of young people who used the college — in particular, a group of neurodiverse folks and those with life difficulties such as blindness. They arrived with their carers each Tuesday morning to attend life skills training, and I noticed them in reception and the college canteen. I was really intrigued by their genuine ability to overcome their various handicaps and develop rapport regardless of both physical and mental handicaps. They weren't bothered by their differences: They were genuinely interested in each other and looked after one another. It was heartwarming to see the friendships that developed through the term and their kindness and generosity to each other. For me, it was a strong lesson in the NLP assumption that 'the map is not the territory'. My own map was drawn from a privileged education at private school and as a medic. So my life experience was very different to theirs. It made me more appreciative of my own life, and I think I went back to work enriched."

Sharpening your rapport following eight quick tips

For starters, try the following immediate ways to begin building rapport:

>> Take a genuine interest in getting to know what's important to other people. Start to understand them instead of expecting them to understand you first.

>> Pick up on the key words, favorite phrases, and manner of speaking that an individual uses and build these aspects subtly into your own conversation.

>> Notice how a person likes to handle information: lots of details or just the big picture? As you speak, offer information in the way in which the person likes to receive it.

>> Check how a person uses representation systems via visual, auditory, and kinesthetic language (which you can read more about in Chapter 5), and use similar words during your conversations.

>> Breathe in unison with the person. You can do this discreetly by watching the person's neck and chest to see when they inhale and exhale and then matching your breathing to theirs.

>> Look out for someone's overall intention — their underlying aim — as opposed to the exact things done or said. People may not always get it right, so work on the assumption that people's hearts lie in the right place.

>> Adopt a similar stance to another person in terms of your body language, gestures, tone of voice, and speed of talking.

>> Respect people's time, energy, friends, favorite associates, and money. These items are important resources for you.

The next four sections contain some more advanced rapport-building techniques.

Viewing the communication wheel and developing rapport

Classic research by Professor Mehrabian at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) made him famous on the relative importance of verbal and non-verbal communication. He concluded that face-to-face communication involves three key elements: tone of voice, nonverbal behavior such as facial expressions, and the words themselves. He also found that the nonverbal elements are heightened when the interaction involves some incongruency. When someone says, "Everything's fine," when clearly they aren't well, you'll notice that how the person behaves and how they speak influence you more than what they actually say.

For many years, Mehrabian's "7–38–55 percent" rule was misquoted as the basis for the impact of all communication. He suggested that 7 percent of the impact derived from the actual words, 38 percent from the tone of voice and the remainder from the facial expression and gestures. Mehrabian has dealt with this generalization by pointing out that his experiments specifically related to communication of feelings and attitudes. (You can find more on generalizations in Chapter 8.) The 7–38–55 percent rule comes into play when the situation is ambiguous, typically when the words used to speak about emotions and feelings aren't consistent with the tone of voice or body language of the speaker. (See Figure 6-1.)
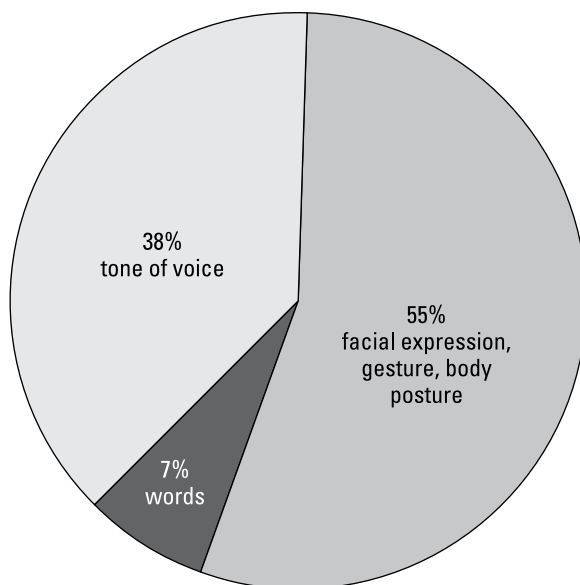
FIGURE 6-1: Mehrabian's 7–38–55 per cent rule relates to incongruent communication.

Clearly, first impressions count. Do you arrive for meetings and appointments appearing hot and harassed or cool and collected? When you begin to talk, do you mumble your words in a low whisper to the floor or gaze directly and confidently at your audience before speaking out loud and clearly?

In terms of building rapport — *you* are the message. And your words, image, and speech must all be working in harmony. If you don't look confident — in other words, as if you believe in your message — people aren't going to listen to what you're saying.

Rapport involves being able to see eye-to-eye with other people, connecting on their wavelength. How sincere you're perceived to be results mostly not from what you say but how you say it, and how you demonstrate appreciation for the other person's thoughts and feelings.

REMEMBER

When you have rapport with someone, you can each disagree with what the other says while still relating respectfully to each other. The important point is to acknowledge other people as the unique individuals that they are. For example, you may well have different political or religious views from your colleagues or clients, but you don't need to fall out about it. People prefer all sorts of different foods to eat for supper, and yet you manage to agree to differ with your family on that point.

Hold on to the fact that you simply hold a different opinion to someone else and that this difference is no reflection on that particular person. Flick to Chapter 11 to read about logical levels and how NLP makes a distinction between beliefs and values at one level, and identity at a higher level. People are more than what they say, do, or believe.

Matching and mirroring

When you're out and about in bars and restaurants (or even the staff cafeteria, if you're lucky enough to get meals at work), have you noticed how two people look when a rapport exists between them? Without hearing the details of the conversation, you can see that the interaction is like a dance: People naturally move in step with each other. A sense of unison informs their body language and the way they talk — elegantly dovetailing their movements and speech. NLP calls this situation *matching and mirroring*, which is when you take on someone else's style of behavior and their skills, values, or beliefs to create rapport.

In contrast, think of a time when you've been an unwilling witness to an embarrassingly public argument between a couple, or a parent and child, in the street or supermarket: not quite a scrap, but almost. Even with the volume turned off, you soon notice when people are totally out of sync with each other, just from their body posture and gestures. NLP calls this situation *mismatching*.

Matching and mirroring are ways of becoming highly tuned to how someone else is thinking and experiencing the world: it's a way of listening with your whole body. Simple mirroring happens naturally when you have rapport.

NLP suggests that you can also deliberately match and mirror someone to build rapport until it becomes natural. To do so, you need to match the following:

>> Body postures and gestures

>> Breathing rates

>> Rhythm of movement and energy levels

>> Voice tonality (how you sound) and speed of speech

WARNING

Beware of the fine line between moving in rhythm with someone and mimicry. People instinctively know when you're making fun of them or being insincere. If you decide you want to check out mirroring for yourself, do so gradually in no-risk situations or with strangers you aren't going to see again. Don't be surprised if it works though and the strangers want to become your friends!

MIRRORING IN THE BRAIN

Initial research by Italian neuroscientists in the 1990s points to brain cells called *mirror neurons* that may enable us to understand how others are thinking, feeling and experiencing the world by observing what they're doing. Studies of brain reactions in macaque monkeys demonstrated that watching others perform an activity such as reaching out for food creates the same brain pattern in the observer as actually doing it. Neurons fired in the monkeys' premotor cortex in the same way both when observing the researchers move and making a similar hand movement themselves. More recently, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) is offering new evidence of the extensive mirror properties in the human brain, too.

Although the function of the mirror system is subject to much caution and a need for further research exists, scientists are certainly excited by the possibility it offers for new approaches to conditions such as autism, psychosis, and schizophrenia and potential new therapies for stroke victims.

WHEN RAPPORT HELPS YOU SAY "NO"

Perhaps you're one of those people who prefer to say "yes" to everything, to be helpful and pleasing to the boss, clients and family. You're the first person to put your hand up in committee meetings, the one who organizes the school jumble sale or charity dinner, who drives the kids around and always ends up having to do the household chores. Discovering how to say "no" sometimes is one of the greatest skills for modern living, if you're to protect yourself from being overloaded and then becoming sick with the stress. As coaches, we point out to our clients that all people have just 168 hours in the week. When you say "yes" to one thing, something else has to give.

At work, a manager can easily be tempted to ask the willing worker to take on more. Consider Jean-Pierre's story.

As a math teacher who loves his job, Jean-Pierre was finding it increasingly hard to say, "I'm not going to take that on." He felt he was letting people down by saying "no" and was in danger of making himself seriously ill as a result of overwork. He discovered that by simply matching the body language of his head of department, he was more easily able to smile and say very politely, "I'd love to do that, but my time is already fully committed. If you want me to take on extra responsibility, you must decide what you'd like me to stop doing to make time for this." In this way, he refused to take on a greater load than he was able to handle.

Pacing to lead other people successfully

Building great relationships requires that you pace other people. As a metaphor, NLP compares pacing people with running alongside a train. If you try to jump straight on to a moving train, you're likely to fall off. In order to jump on to a moving train, you need to race alongside it until you're moving at the same speed.

In order to lead people — to influence them with your point of view — remember to pace them first. This approach means really listening to them, fully acknowledging them, truly understanding where they're coming from — and being patient about it.

REMEMBER

To build rapport, NLP advises you to pace, pace, and pace again before you lead. Pacing is how NLP describes your flexibility in picking up and matching, respectfully, other people's behaviors and vocabulary, and how you actively listen to the other person. Leading is when you attempt to get the other person to change by subtly taking that person in a new direction.

Pacing begins with breathing. First notice how somebody is breathing. High levels of stress or agitation will show up as fast or labored breathing. If that's the case, then you will need to pace them for a while by raising your own energy — for example by speaking louder or faster, before you can calm them.

In business, companies that succeed in introducing major change programs do so in measured steps, allowing employees to accept changes gradually. People are unwilling to be led to new ways of working until they have first been listened to and acknowledged (that is, paced). The most effective leaders are those who pace the reality of their people's experience first.

When you watch effective salespeople in action you can see how they master the art of pacing the customer and demonstrate genuine interest. (By effective, we're thinking of those who sell a genuine product with integrity rather than the shark approach.) They listen, listen, and listen some more to ascertain the customer's

needs — what the person really wants — before trying to sell anything. People resent being sold to, but they love to be listened to and to talk about what's important to them. An antiques dealer friend has perfected this art over many years, gently guiding his customers through his genuine affection for the articles he sells from his own home and sharing his expertise.

When Kate bought a car several years ago, she went to six different showrooms where salespeople rushed to sell the virtues of their car without showing any interest in how it fit in with her lifestyle. At the time she had a young family and went on long trips with the children in the car.

The salesperson who was successful displayed superb interpersonal skills and presented a practical, family car. He paced Kate well, listening carefully, treating her with respect (unlike those who assumed the buying decision would be made by her husband) and trusted her with the keys so she was able to take it for a spin immediately. As she drove along, the salesman gently gathered the information he needed to match the right model of car to her buying criteria, realizing she wasn't going to accept a hard, direct sell. Within half an hour, she bought the car and became a firm advocate of the brand and the dealership. She actually felt an affection for that car that none since has truly matched.

Building rapport in the virtual world

In our early careers, virtual communication was mostly confined to research labs and technology geeks. We sent and received bank checks, letters, and faxes and jumped in the car to visit suppliers and colleagues. Today, life is managed online. We connect via Zoom, Teams, What's App, and FaceTime. It feels like a disaster if the Wi-Fi goes down or we accidently leave a smartphone in the wrong place. We worry about children's safety with electronic games and chat.

In this virtual world, you lose the nuances of facial expressions and body language, the subtlety of getting to know your colleague at the next desk as you work closely with them. You don't experience those coffee machine chats where you get to understand each other in person. At its best, the virtual team spells freedom and flexibility of working practices, diversity, and a richness of skills; at its worst, it's lonely, isolated, and ineffective.

With back-to-back short virtual meetings, building rapport becomes more challenging than ever. No wonder that people are being recruited based on their soft skills — the ability to influence and negotiate — rather than their technical competence.

Here are ten ways to develop rapport in a virtual meeting:

» Make sure that all the locations are connected and everyone can see and hear each other. Spend the first few minutes introducing people so everyone can been seen and heard. If some people can only join with audio, make extra effort to be inclusive.

» Work to a clear agenda. Set outcomes for the call and agree to them with all participants.

» Check that you've received input from a mix of people. If necessary, encourage the quieter individuals to take part; say, for example, "Mike, what are your thoughts on this?"

» Discourage small talk or separate chats. Stick to one discussion, one meeting, one agenda.

» Speak more slowly and precisely than in face-to-face meetings. Remember you can't get clues from body language.

» Listen for the style of language — check whether people have visual, auditory, or kinesthetic preferences, and match your language style to theirs (as we suggest in Chapter 5).

» Gain everyone's attention before making your point (otherwise, the first part of the message gets lost). Begin with phrases along the lines of "I have something I'd like to mention here" and "It's about."

» Use people's names to a greater degree than in face-to-face meetings. Address questions to people by name and thank them for their contribution by name.

» If it's just a voice call, visualize the person at the other end of the phone line as you listen to the conversation (you may even like to have a photo of each person in front of you).

» Summarize and check your understanding of points and decisions continually.

Technology has given us the ability to reach many more people than we could see or hear in real time. This creates the problem of how to gauge their reaction to adapt your response so you create and maintain rapport with your audience. Here are a couple of suggestions.

» Provide visual impact by using vibrant pictures and embedding video into your emails and on your website. Doing so gives members of your audience the chance to see as well as hear you when they're deciding if they want to build a relationship with you. (If you're concerned that you may lose people, wouldn't you rather spend quality time with people who get you/your message than waste your efforts trying to woo dissenters?)

>> Imagine your audience members sitting in front of you while you have a conversation with them. Doing so will help you feel relaxed and confident, which will come across in your delivery.

>> Add variety to your tone of voice, its pitch, rhythm, volume, and timbre, to keep your audience interested and engaged. Varying the pace of your "conversation" allows you to emphasize a point. This is particularly important if you ask a rhetorical question because it gives people time to process what you've said.

TIP

>> Remember that people buy based on their emotions — and online, you can incorporate images, music, and words to evoke the desired emotion. By the way, if you don't think you're a salesperson because you don't have a product to sell, think of ideas and concepts as a product. You may be selling your idea of a good night out to your friends or persuading your child that eating her vegetables is the best policy. Whatever you're "selling" requires you to influence your "buyer" to buy your product or to buy into your idea.

WARNING

Check copyright issues when using images and music for public consumption.

Knowing How to Break Rapport and Why You May Want To

At times, you may choose to *mismatch* people for a while in order to break rapport deliberately. Mismatching is the opposite of matching or mirroring (which we describe in the earlier section "Matching and mirroring"). To mismatch someone, you aim to do something dissimilar to them, such as dressing very differently, speaking in a different tone or at a different speed, adopting a different physical posture, or behaving quite differently from them.

ANECDOTE

We worked with a team of physicians in a medical center who were experiencing work overload as a result of the long-term sickness of one partner. In the initial assessments with them, we noticed how most of our meetings were completed within the allotted one hour, and yet meetings with one partner took nearly twice as long. This particular doctor had a reputation for being especially kind and help-ful with her patients; she scored highest in popularity in a patient survey. Indeed, she is a great listener, and patients love her approach. However, to get through her case load during normal surgery hours, she had to discover how to limit the time with each patient in a more disciplined way. She found a way to mismatch sensitively and get through her patient list. Her change in behavior was helpful for colleagues as well as her own well-being.

Discovering how to break rapport sensitively

Three particular changes to your behavior can enable you to break rapport in the short term:

» **How you look and move physically:** You can stand up, move physically away from someone, break eye contact, or use a facial expression to communicate your message. Raised eyebrows say a lot. Turning your back is even more powerful, so beware of doing this action inadvertently!

» **How you sound:** You can change your voice intonation or volume. Make it louder or softer, higher or lower, and remember the power of silence.

» **The words you say:** Remember that useful little phrase, "No, thank you." Sometimes it can be the hardest thing to say, so practice for when you need it. In multicultural settings, switching to your native language when you've been working in a common language is another clear way of saying, "I need a break now."

You're going to want to say, "Thank you" and "Goodbye for now," plenty of times. Notice which situations are easier for you to handle and those that need some practice:

» **You're closing a deal:** Salespeople momentarily break connection with a customer at the point of signing the contract. They walk away and leave the customer to look at the paperwork alone instead of becoming connected to that final signing in the customer's eyes. This approach helps to maintain rapport in the long term if buyers' remorse sets in.

» **You have enough information:** Maybe your brain has filled up for the moment and you're heading into sensory overload. You want time to think and digest what you've heard and to come back for the next installment later.

» **You see someone else you want to talk to:** Perhaps you're at a cocktail party and have become stuck with the ultimate bore and someone much more attractive is at the other side of the room.

» **You're tired:** All good things come to an end, and you need to know when the time has come for the party to end and head home.

» **You're busy:** At any one time, you're going to experience a number of demands on your energy. Focus and hold on to your own outcome rather than satisfying someone else's.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Ralph was a very competent engineer and a great storyteller. He'd traveled widely, met all the senior people in the company as they were ascending the career ladder and had had interesting jobs. All the newcomers in the team loved to hear his anecdotes at the coffee machine — for a while.

Unfortunately, Ralph didn't recognize the signs when people had heard enough. As colleagues were politely edging back to their desks or desperately trying to leave the building at night, Ralph would corner them and carry on with his stories, oblivious to the bored stares or attempts to end the conversation. The more they tried to get away, the more he'd become entrenched in the next episode: "And let me just tell you about. . ." People had the feeling that if they walked away and came back next year, he'd just pick up where he'd left off.

Ultimately, team members began to avoid him. They joked about him behind his back because he refused to pick up the cues that he'd taken more than his acceptable slot. They stopped inviting him to meetings because they feared he'd dominate the proceedings. His career progress suffered. Colleagues deliberately broke rapport, and in the end most contact, to protect their own time.

As Ralph became increasingly ostracized within the team, he became more desperate to tell his stories and gather an audience around him. Eventually a kind colleague who had received training in giving and receiving feedback decided to tackle the issue head on with Ralph as he saw just what damage was taking place.

» **You're getting into tricky subject areas:** Sex, politics, and religion are all good subjects to avoid in a business negotiation. They also cause overly lively dinner-party conversations where you may want to blow the whistle, call time-out, and agree to differ when discussions get heated.

Breaking rapport and ending a conversation is a real skill, particularly if your best friend or parent wants to chat. Do it with consideration. Give clear feedback that you'd love to talk so long as it's at the right place and time. You care about the person, so try to arrange a time to talk that suits you both.

Grasping the power of the word *but*

Sometimes a tiny word can make a huge difference between your ability to maintain rapport and break it. NLP pays attention to such details in the pattern of conversation and so offers some useful clues for you to observe if you want to

influence communication. Work by Robert Dilts on sleight-of-mouth patterns has demonstrated the power of words to frame people's experience: NLP calls this *verbal reframing*. Even simple connective words such as *and* or *but* make listeners focus their attention in different ways. When you adopt the word *but*, people tend to remember what you say after it. With the word *and*, people tend to recall what you said before and after it. When you use the connection *even though*, the effect is to focus attention on the first statement, as in, "*It is snowing today* even though the weather forecast indicated it would be clear." By changing the order of words in a sentence, you can change people's experience.

REMEMBER

Be aware that when you make a comment to someone, they may notice only part of what you say. Consider the following example: "The company has returned $5 million profit this financial year, but we're closing the San Francisco operation." If you phrase the news in this way, people may only remember what you said after the word *but*. Now consider the following: "The company has returned $5 million profit this financial year, and we're closing the San Francisco operation." Phrased in this way, people may well remember what you said *before* and *after* the word *and*.

TRY THIS

Find out just how much difference little words can make in your daily communication with the "Yes, but. . ." game for three or more players. Follow these steps:

1. **Get your friends into a circle.**

2. **Round one starts with Person A offering "a good idea."**

   For example, "It's a sunny day. How about we take the afternoon off and head out to the beach?"

3. **Person B replies "Yes, but. . .," and offers another "good idea" in return.**

   For example, "Yes, but we have work to finish."

4. **Person C and all the other players offer their ideas in turn, always starting with "Yes, but. . . ."**

   For example, "Yes, but we'll miss lunch."

5. **Round two continues with Person A offering a good idea; it can be the same as in round one or a different idea.**

   For example, "It's a sunny day. How about we take the afternoon off and take a walk by the river?"

6. **Person B replies "Yes, and. . .," and offers another "good idea" in return.**

   For example, "Yes, and we can have a picnic on the way."

7. **Person C and all the other players offer their ideas in turn, always starting with "Yes, and. . . ."**

   For example, "Yes, and I'll check the map to find out how to access the river."

Notice the difference? In spite of the instruction to come up with a good idea, the use of the word *but* seems to naturally lead the conversation to a negative place and detract from the original good idea. By contrast, the word *and* builds one good idea upon another.

Understanding Other Points of View

Successful people enjoy the flexibility of being able to see the world in different ways. They take multiple perspectives, enabling themselves to explore new ideas. NLP offers various techniques to help people build rapport in very challenging relationships, especially where some kind of emotional conflict exists. These techniques are also used to explore new ways of building rapport, even in relationships that are only mildly troublesome or confusing.

Exploring perceptual positions

One of the ways in which NLP helps you to build rapport with others is by distinguishing at least three different points of view. NLP calls these *perceptual positions.* This approach is rather like looking at a building from all angles — coming in at the front entrance, moving round to the back door, and then looking down with a bird's-eye view from a helicopter overhead:

» **The first position** is your own natural perspective, whereby you're fully aware of what you think and feel regardless of those around you. This position can be one of strength — when you're really clear about what you want and your own beliefs and values — but also one of incredible selfishness, until you consciously become aware of what other people want.

» **The second position** is about shifting into someone else's shoes — imagining what a situation looks like for them. You may already be really good at always considering the needs of others; mothers, for example, rapidly develop this skill in caring for new offspring. You put someone else's view first.

» **The third position** involves taking an independent view, whereby you act as a detached observer noticing what's happening in the relationship. At its best, this position is one of maturity from which you appreciate a situation from both sides. Sometimes, however, it can mean that you're reluctant to engage fully in a situation — you merely sit on the fence.

Mastering all three perspectives puts you in a wise place that allows you to enjoy life more fully.

Get into the habit of mentally shifting your thinking into the second and third positions when you're in conversation.

Looking into the NLP meta-mirror

The meta-mirror is an excellent coaching exercise, originally developed by Robert Dilts, which allows you to bring together a number of different perspectives or perceptual positions. The basis of the meta-mirror is the idea that the problem or conflict you face is more a reflection of you, and how you relate to yourself, than about the other person. The meta-mirror approach allows you to step back and see the problem you're facing in a new light — hence the idea of the mirror.

The meta-mirror helps you to prepare for, or review, a number of possible scenarios:

>> Difficult conversations with a teenager or family member

>> Presentations at work

>> Meetings with your bank manager

>> Contract negotiations

>> Sensitive discussions with a partner or friend

>> Attempting to relate better to your boss or a colleague at work

>> Dealing with difficult clients

ANECDOTE

Saul was having his house rebuilt, and the builder wasn't keeping to schedule because he was working on a number of jobs at the same time. As this poor service made Saul increasingly angry, Kate coached him through the three perceptual positions to plan a difficult meeting with the builder instead of igniting the showdown that seemed inevitable as the conflict escalated.

Saul recognized that the builder had serious cash-flow issues and was going through a difficult time with his family. "The exercise made me stop and recognize that he wasn't deliberately messing with me. So I took him out for a beer, explained how dissatisfied I was feeling, and we agreed on a tighter schedule for the stages in the build during which I'd release money in smaller amounts as work was completed. This arrangement turned the situation around for both of us and saved court action."

TRY THIS

The following exercise takes four perceptual positions. You may like to try it with the assistance of a coach or friend to help you concentrate on the process so that you work only with your issues.

To start, choose a relationship you want to explore. Perhaps you want to gain some insight into a difficult conversation or confrontation, in the past or the future. Lay out four spaces on the floor to denote four positions (as Figure 6-2 shows) — pieces of paper or sticky notes are fine. Note that you must "break state" (which shifts your perspective) between each position by physically moving between each space. Just shake your body a little or look out of the window and think about what you're going to have for supper tonight! Now follow these steps:

First position

Second position

Fourth position
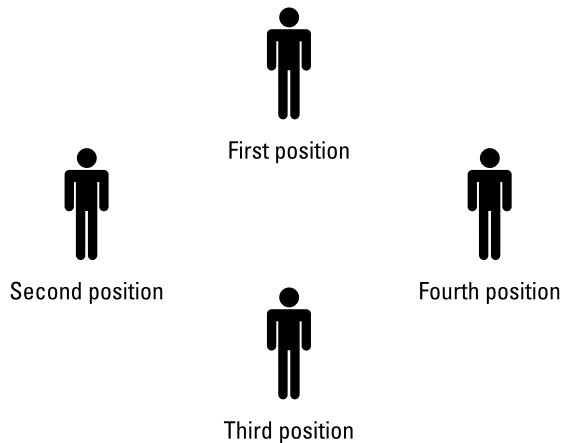
Third position

1. **Stand in the *first position*, your point of view, imagining that you're looking at the other person in the second position.**

   Ask yourself, "What am I experiencing, thinking, and feeling as I look at this person?"

2. **Now shake that off and go to stand in the *second position*, imagining that you're the person looking back at yourself in the first position.**

   Ask yourself, "What am I experiencing, thinking, and feeling as I look at this person?"

3. **Now shake that off and stand in the *third position*, that of the independent observer viewing both people in this relationship impartially.**

   Looking at yourself in the first position, how do you respond to that "you?"

4. **Now shake that off and stand in a further external space, the *fourth position*.**

   Think about how your thoughts in the third position compared with your reactions in the first position and switch them around. For example, in the first

position you may have felt confused, whereas in the third position you may have felt sadness. Whatever your reactions, in your mind's eye, switch them to the opposite positions.

5. **Go back and revisit the *second position*.**

Ask yourself, "How is this different now? What's changed?"

6. **Finish by coming home to the *first position*.**

Ask yourself, "How is this different now? What's changed?"

TIP

Although doing this exercise can seem very strange at first, persist. When you move *physically* into a different space, considering the different perspectives is important. Simply by moving your body to another place in the room, you unlock the thinking of the previous position. You can also do this exercise by moving between different chairs.

TIP

In NLP circles, resistance is often cited as a lack of rapport. For example, somebody may resist your attempts to get to know them better by being stand-offish and excluding you from a conversation. Or you may resist making the effort to connect with someone who appears different from you. If you find yourself in situations in which you don't always have the rapport with people that would be useful, you may need to try the following:

>> Recognize that you're unconsciously resisting the people or the situation in which you find yourself or that somebody else is resisting you.

>> Consider the possible reason for this, remembering that the unconscious mind is naturally protecting you (see Chapter 3).

>> Refine your rapport-building skills by deliberately matching, mirroring, and pacing the other person until they're willing to connect with you.

Overcoming your resistance to developing rapport with someone can take some time because you have to examine your past to understand your defensive behavior. You may need the help of a coach or friend to gain this understanding — for example, you may have real justification for your reluctance to get too close to someone. When you discover the reason for your own resistance, you can give yourself permission to develop the rapport that you're seeking.

Chapter **7**

Understanding to Be Understood

I n 1956, George Miller carried out research on the millions of chunks of data that bombard the senses of humans every second. He discovered that the conscious mind can handle only between five and nine pieces of information at any one time, which means that an awful lot of information is filtered out.

Meta programs are some of these unconscious filters that direct what you pay attention to, the way you process any information you receive, and how you then communicate it. You can detect a person's meta programs from the way they use language.

When you want to build rapport with someone quickly and you're forearmed, you may choose to dress, behave, or speak like that person. Speaking like someone doesn't mean mimicking their accent, however; rather, you use their vocabulary. When you begin to hear other people's meta programs, you can achieve rapport faster by matching the language patterns of the person with whom you're inter-acting. Because people use meta programs mostly unconsciously, when you match their meta programs, what you say has the added dimension of communicating simultaneously with their unconscious and conscious minds.

As you begin learning and incorporating meta programs into your life, become aware of people's body language. You will discover more about the words used

with specific meta programs later in this chapter. For now, this is just a quick mention to watch out for the physiology you might observe in relation to meta programs. A person exhibiting "proactive" tendencies may have a forward-leaning posture, quicker gestures, and sharper energy, whereas someone who speaks with "reactive" patterns may have slower movements, more stillness, or lean back as they reflect. A detail-oriented speaker might use small and precise gestures, whereas a global thinker may sweep their hands wide when talking about "the big picture."

In this chapter, we introduce you to seven meta programs that help you to communicate more effectively and quickly. As you experience the benefits of better communication, we hope that you're motivated to discover more about other meta programs.

Getting to Grips with Meta-Program Basics

As children, you pick up meta programs from your parents, teachers, and the culture in which you're raised. Your life experiences may change these learned programs as you get older. For instance, if you grow up being admonished for being too subjective, you may start practicing detachment and learn to suppress your feelings. You can find that these attributes then affect your choice of career. Instead of entering a caring profession, you may decide to use your intellect more. Your learning style may be influenced too, and you lean toward focusing more on facts and figures. As a trainer, you may find yourself leaning toward more structured, lecture-style delivery, rather than encouraging learners to engage in hands-on, interactive experiences that help them test and integrate what they're learning. Of the many identified meta programs, we choose seven that we think are the most useful to get you started. For example, we select the *global and detail* meta program because we believe that it has great potential for conflict, and by recognizing another's capacity for operating at the global or detailed end of the scale, you may be able to avoid possible problems. By understanding the other six meta programs, you can develop a greater insight into the subtle ways in which people think, which gives you the tools to influence and facilitate change by motivating not only yourself but other people too.

In Chapter 8, you can find a discussion of the introvert and extrovert meta program. The meta programs discussed in this chapter are proactive/reactive, options/procedures, toward/away from, internal/external, global/detail, sameness/difference, time perspective.

As you think about meta programs, keep these things in mind:

» Meta programs aren't an either/or choice. You operate meta programs all the time; however, depending on the context in which you find yourself, you may be more inclined to use one aspect of a particular meta program than the other.

» Meta programs aren't a means to pigeonhole people; they're useful to expand your understanding of the variety of ways in which people think with the goal of improving communication.

» Meta programs aren't right or wrong; you simply run various combinations of meta programs depending on the context of the communication and the environment in which you find yourself.

Looking at meta programs and language patterns

If you're able to pick up on people's language, you can discover their patterns of behavior long before the behavior becomes apparent. Leslie Cameron-Bandler, among others, conducted further research into the meta programs developed by Richard Bandler. She and her student, Rodger Bailey, established that people who use similar language patterns portray similar patterns of behavioral tendencies. For example, people with an entrepreneurial flair may have similar patterns — outgoing, good at persuading people, strong belief in themselves, and so on — even though they may work in very different fields.

Imagine a gathering of United Nations officials without translators: very little communication would take place. A similar breakdown in communication can occur if you're unaware of the meta programs being employed by the person with whom you're trying to communicate. Learning about meta programs allows you to become proficient in translating the mental maps that people use to navigate their way around their experiences.

NLP pioneers, Bandler and Grinder, realized that people who use similar language patterns develop deeper rapport more quickly than people who use dissimilar ones. No doubt you've heard some non-French speakers complain that the French are unfriendly. Others who can speak French refute this opinion. Meta programs are a powerful way to establish rapport verbally by hearing people's patterns of speech and then responding with language that they can understand easily.

To help you understand the type of language that's characteristic of the various meta programs, we include in the following sections phrases that you're likely to hear with each.

Exploring meta programs and behavior

In the *Encyclopedia of Systemic Neuro-Linguistic Programming and NLP New Coding*, Robert Dilts and Judith DeLozier explain meta programs in terms of two people with the same decision-making strategies getting different results when presented with the same information. For example, although both people may make a picture of the data in their heads, one person may become completely overwhelmed with the amount of information, whereas the other reaches a quick decision based on the feelings the pictures produce. (You can find out more about how people process the information they receive through their senses in Chapters 5 and 10.) The difference lies in the meta programs that each person is running, which impacts their decision-making strategy.

Suppose that you want to emulate Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin group of companies. You can do so by implementing the processes that you think he uses by modeling him. (See Chapter 19 for more on modeling.) Assuming you don't have access to Richard Branson in person, you can work out his patterns from reading about him, watching and listening to him on the news or Internet, and reading what he writes about. Part of the modeling process requires that you listen for, understand, and use his meta programs.

Later sections describe the behaviors and preferences associated with the different meta programs that we offer you in this chapter. By being able to recognize the meta program that people are prone to operating in a given setting, you can begin to match people's meta programs to become more like them and get your message heard more easily. By trying on someone else's model of the world, you may gain a different perspective and add to the options available to you in other areas of your life — an added bonus.

A SHORT HISTORY OF META PROGRAMS

Humans have been trying to understand personality types since time immemorial. As long ago as 400 BC, Hippocrates defined four *temperaments* based on his observations of fluids in the human body. He called these temperaments melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic. Although the Hippocratic classifications fell by the wayside, others are used a great deal.

In 1921, Carl Jung published *Psychological Types*. This book was based on his work with several hundred psychiatric patients and was his attempt to categorize them to be able to predict their behavior from their personality. Jung defined three pairs of categories in which one of each pair would be used in preference to the other:

- An *extrovert* is energized by interacting with the outside world, whereas an *introvert* recharges his batteries by taking time to be on his own.

- A *sensor* takes in information through the five senses, whereas an *intuitor* relies more on instincts and intuition to collect information.

- A *thinker* makes decisions based on logic and objective thinking, whereas a *feeler* makes decisions based on subjective values.

Jung's personality types form the basis of the *Myers–Briggs Type Indicator*, which is one of the most widely used profiling tools today. In the early 1940s, a mother (Katharine Briggs) and daughter (Isabel Briggs Myers) team added a fourth category: a *judger*, who attempts to make their environment adapt to suit themselves, and a *perceiver*, who tries to gain an understanding of the external world and adapt to fit into the world.

Being Proactive/Reactive

If you're more inclined to act and get things moving, you operate at the *proactive* end of the scale. If, however, you're inclined to take stock and wait for things to happen, you're probably more *reactive.* Some more in–depth descriptions follow:

» **Proactive:** If you're proactive, you take charge and get things done. You're good at spotting solutions to situations that require constant fire-fighting. You may find yourself drawn to jobs in sales or working for yourself. You find yourself upsetting some people, especially if they're more reactive, because they liken you to a bulldozer.

» **Reactive:** If you're more reactive, you may be quite fatalistic. You wait for others to take the lead or you act only when you consider the time to be right. While being able to reflect is a strong quality, you may need to be careful not to analyze yourself into a state of paralysis.

ANECDOTE

You can exhibit proactive or reactive tendencies depending on the context within which you're working. Robert, although very good at his job, is quite reactive about asserting himself with regard to requesting promotion and pay increases. He waits for his boss to offer rather than asking for them. He prefers to wait for instructions before working on projects rather than initiating work. However, he loves his holidays and is extremely proactive in visiting travel websites, reading TripAdvisor ratings, talking to people (including his Facebook and Instagram buddies), and generally doing great research when planning his next trip.

You can spot the difference between a proactive and a reactive person by the body language. A proactive person is likely to have quicker movements, showing signs

of impatience. These people are likely to hold themselves erect in a "shoulders back, chest out" posture that's ready to take on the world. A reactive person displays slower movements and may keep his head down and shoulders slouched.

According to Shelle Rose Charvet, in her book *Words That Change Minds* (Bloomanity LLC, 2019), when advertising for a person who you want to be proactive, you should ask the candidate to telephone instead of sending a CV. As a general rule, reactive people are less likely to call.

To discover whether someone is proactive or reactive, you can ask, "Do you find it easy to take action when you find yourself in a new situation, or do you need to study and understand what's going on first?"

>> A proactive person uses phrases such as *just do it, jump to it, go for it, run with it, take control*, and *hit the ground running*.

>> A reactive person is more likely to use phrases such as, *"mull it over, take your time, study the data, weigh the pros and cons*, and *look before you leap."*

PROACTIVE REACTION TO A REACTIVE DEPARTMENT

ANECDOTE

The IT staff at a university in south-east England were always fire-fighting as they tried to provide a service to the bursary and registry departments. The two departments that used the computer systems had no communication and the IT staff didn't trust the users enough to train them in the use of their systems. No documentation existed for which programs needed to be run and when. This situation had been in place for several years and was accepted as the norm. Guess what preference the IT staff demonstrated? If you guessed reactive, you're right. Fortunately, a relative newcomer, with a more proactive bent, joined the IT department and instigated the following three simple steps:

- Created and maintained a list of tasks, containing operating instructions and when they were needed.

- Organized regular meetings between the bursar and registrar's offices.

- Trained the administrative staff to produce their own reports.

These changes reduced the considerable stress that the staff of all three departments experienced, especially at peak times, and opened communication channels between the two offices using the computer systems. The self-esteem of the administrative staff soared as they took some responsibility for running their own systems.

Moving Toward/Away From

People invest time, energy, and resources in moving toward or away from something that they find enjoyable or want to avoid. They use their values to judge whether an action is good or bad and whether the result they get gives them pleasure or pain.

Can you remember the last time you started an exercise regime or began a new diet? Perhaps you were all fired up and eager to start, and consequently you made terrific progress: You began to lose weight and you felt so much better as a result of the exercise. Suddenly, however, you lost your momentum, the weight stopped dropping off, or, worse still, started creeping up. The visits to the gym became more sporadic. As things started to go downhill, you got all fired up again until. . . . You were caught in a roller coaster of being motivated and losing your focus.

"What happened?" you cry in despair. Chances are that where your health is concerned, you have an *away from* meta program, which means that you're propelled to take action to get away from something, in this case weight or perhaps lethargy. Figure 7-1 illustrates how someone whose motivation in relation to health is primarily *away from* may experience yo-yo weight loss over a period of time.
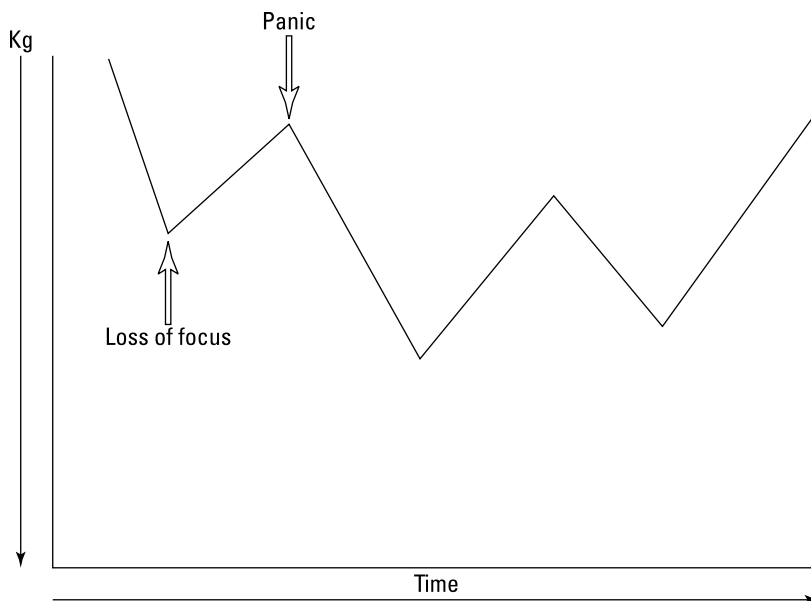
FIGURE 7-1:
An example of how having an away from meta program regarding health can affect your plans for weight loss.

On the other hand, if you're drawn toward a goal in a particular context and are able to keep your eye on the ball, you're showing more of a *toward* propensity.

As a general rule, people move either away from or toward things. According to Sigmund Freud, your *id*, which represents your instinctive urges, moves you toward pleasure or away from pain.

It may seem that NLP is all about positive goals and outcomes and therefore, the tendency to focus toward what you want is given a higher value. If you think about it, fear is a very strong motivator. You'll be motivated to move very fast if pursued by a predator. Similarly, the fear of losing something you value will propel you to act. You may decide to start living within your means because you realize you stand to lose your home if you can't afford to pay the mortgage. An away from motivator is extremely powerful in getting you started on a course of action; however, remaining focused on staying away from what you're afraid to lose can become extremely debilitating as you live in a state of constant stress that ultimately takes a toll on your emotions and body. Switching your strategy to one that is toward as soon as you've stabilized a situation is essential.

WARNING

Stress can stop you from making rational decisions, so be careful when starting a project and ensure the well-formed conditions (see Chapter 4) are met when deciding on what you need to do.

Interestingly, different professions and cultures exhibit a bias for running toward or away from meta programs. Take the example of conventional medicine as opposed to alternative practices. Which preference do you think practitioners from the two camps may demonstrate? Here's a hint: Conventional doctors refer to alternative medicine as "preventative medicine." In Romilla's assessment, conventional medicine is more prone to an away from tendency with regard to health, the emphasis being on curing the illness after it happens rather than on focusing on creating and maintaining good health.

People with away from patterns appear quite negative to those who run toward patterns. Away from people tend to notice what can go wrong and are thus very useful in jobs involving maintaining quality and safety (as in production plants and the aircraft industry), managing crises, or conducting critical analysis. These people are motivated more by the stick than the carrot. You can motivate away from people by threatening job losses and the negative consequences of not meeting financial targets.

People with toward meta programs may be seen as naive by the away from people because the former don't always think about and cater for potential problems in the pursuit of their goals. Toward people are motivated by the promise of the carrot. Tell them about the benefits of improving revenue and receiving a bonus and watch their eyes light up. This reaction isn't necessarily motivated by greed; rather, they're excited by positive benefits.

You can find out whether a person prefers moving toward or away from something using a series of questions, such as this example:

Person A: What's important to you about your work?

Person B: I know I have security.

Person A: So what's important to you about security?

Person B: I don't have to worry about paying my bills.

Person A: And what's important to you about paying your bills?

Person B: It means I'm not in debt.

Going to at least three levels of questions is useful because initially people may tend to respond with something positive, which can hide their away from patterns. In the preceding example, the initial answer is toward security, although subsequent answers reveal an away from preference.

When selling a product, research the customer's language patterns. You can then elicit whether the person wants to buy the product to gain a benefit — such as buying a sports car in which they can have fun and feel the excitement of whizzing along with the sun roof down and the wind blowing through their hair — or to avoid a problem — for example, when buying a safe, solid family car with a focus on keeping their family safe from harm. Modify your language accordingly to save time and get results.

You move away from or toward your values. If moving away from values aren't serving you, you may decide to change them. If sports lessons at school were a painful experience and consequently sports days a humiliation, you may have problems keeping up an exercise routine. One way of releasing the emotions invested in negative memories is through Time Line Therapy (which we discuss in detail in Chapter 13). Consider the following use of language:

» A person with more of a toward meta program uses words such as *accomplish*, *get*, *obtain*, *have*, *achieve*, *attain*, and *include*.

» A person who operates a more away from meta program uses words such as *avoid*, *remove*, *prevent*, *get rid of*, and *solution*.

Kate was coaching an engineer, Alex, who'd suffered a bereavement some years earlier and was unable to shake off his feeling of deep sadness. He felt these feelings were getting in the way of him making the best of his career because he came across as very negative much of the time, and that wasn't his natural style. He wanted to feel positive about going to work. Through their sessions, Alex paid attention to moving away from his sadness toward focusing on being joyful.

He practiced noticing the "gems" in his everyday work by keeping a daily journal of the simple moments that made him happy — whether having his favorite coffee with frothy milk on the top, his walk along the canal at lunchtime, or a well-produced design diagram. Within a very short space of time, people around Alex responded to the new, more positive behavior and in turn wanted to spend time with him, listened to him, included him in key discussions, and generally made his working day more enjoyable.

Discovering Options/Procedures

If you're more of an *options* person, you enjoy trying out new ways of doing things. As a *procedures* person, you display a preference for following set methodologies.

An options person loves variety. The analogy that springs to mind is that of offering a gourmet a smorgasbord or dim sum and letting the person pick and savor the myriad delicacies on offer. If you're a person with a preference for an options meta program, you're good at starting projects, although you may not always see them through. You're good at setting up procedures, just as long as you're not the one who's expected to follow them! Because of your penchant for testing new ways, you're unable to resist improving the most rigorously tried and tested methods or of finding some way to bend that company rule.

ANECDOTE Don't ask options people to drive, unless you want to see the sights — they like to take a different route each time. Romilla always allows plenty of time to get somewhere new because she has a tendency to get lost. When she gets to her destination without losing her way, she feels cheated.

TIP Heaven help you if you're proposing to an options person! Even if the options person loves you to bits, you may have a hard time gaining commitment because options people worry about getting hemmed in, missing out on experiences, and so on. To get options people to say "yes" to you, you need to show them all the opportunities that open up for them if they do assent.

If you have a procedures preference, you like to follow set rules and procedures, although you may prefer to have these created for you rather than design them yourself. When you have a working procedure, you follow it repeatedly, without modification. You may feel compelled to follow each step of a procedure to the end and feel cheated if circumstances prevent you from doing so. You stick to speed limits and take personal affront when other drivers pass inconsiderately or with only one hand on the steering wheel.

Romilla really understood the difference between the two preferences when she was learning the healing technique of *Huna* in Hawaii. Two of her group of three wanted to sit out under the trees, by a large pond, overlooking the ocean, to work on an exercise and experiment. Richard, the third person, became extremely distressed and was ready to storm off and find another group to work with because he needed to be in the same environment in which the exercise had been demonstrated and to conduct it in exactly the way he'd been shown.

You can find out which of the two preferences a person demonstrates in a given context by asking, "Why did you choose this job?" "Why did you choose to come to this party?" or "Why did you choose your particular car?" People with an options preference may give you a list of their values that were satisfied by choosing the job, attending the party or buying the car. You may hear their reasons for making the choice and the possibilities that choice opens up for them. People with a procedures preference, in contrast, launch into a story or list the steps that got them the job, how they got to the party, or chose the car.

For instance, "My car was seven years old, and it was time for a change. Over a few months, I read car magazines and weighed the pros and cons of different makes and models — including electric and hybrid options. What finally helped me decide was learning that hybrids combine a traditional gas engine with an electric motor, so I could still refuel quickly at a gas station without having to wait around for a full charge."

Consider how options and procedures people express themselves:

» You may hear someone with a mainly options meta program use words and phrases such as *play it by ear*, *bend the rules*, *possibilities*, *let's play with this*, and *try these other ways*.

» You may hear someone mainly at the procedures end of the scale using expressions such as *follow the steps*, *obey the rules*, *step by step*, and words like *first*, *second* (and so on), and *finally*.

Delving into the Internal/External

If you trust your judgment when making decisions or knowing that you've done a good job, you operate at the *internal* end of the scale for this meta program. If you need feedback from other people to know how well you've done, you probably have more of an *external* preference. The crux of this meta program is whether the location for motivating yourself, judging your actions, and making decisions lies within you or with other people.

Most children have an external frame of reference, which develops as they absorb the conscious and unconscious teachings of their parents and teachers. Maturity, however, usually shifts this reference point to becoming more internal, as you gain greater understanding of yourself and therefore trust your judgments and decisions more. A similar transition can occur when you learn something new. You may have more of an external reference at first, needing other people to tell you how well you're doing. Experience and knowledge can then shift the reference to internal.

You have a propensity for working at the internal end of the scale, in a given context, when you question the negative feedback you receive, even if several people have said more or less the same thing. You don't need to be praised for doing a good job because you already know that you did well.

People who tend toward the internal may do well as entrepreneurs, because they don't have to wait for someone else to tell them what to do or how well they're doing it.

Bosses, if they have an internal frame of reference, need to remember to give feedback to their staff, who may have an external frame of reference and be craving praise and wanting to be told how they're doing.

If you have an external bent, you need to receive feedback from other people to know how you're doing and to keep yourself motivated. Unless they explain the need for the outcomes they want in a job, internal employees may prove difficult to manage, particularly if your management style is to micro-manage. They want to do things their way and operate from their own standards. External people, on the other hand, are easier to manage as long as you understand that they need direction and praise.

To find out where on the scale a person is located, ask the following: "How do you know you've done a good job, bought the right car, made the right decision?" An internally referenced person may respond with "I just know when I've done a good job," whereas an externally referenced person may say, "My family really likes the car," or "My wife approved of my decision."

The clues to connecting with an internally or externally referenced person lie in the language, for example:

>> When speaking to a person who operates from an internal frame of reference, you may gain greater leverage if you use phrases such as *only you can be the judge, it's entirely up to you, see for yourself,* and *study the facts to help you decide.*

>> When talking to someone who's more externally referenced, you may get a better response by using phrases such as *the statistics/studies show*, *they'll approve, expert opinion is*, and *this has sold really well*.

Going Global/Detailed

When they start work on a project or are setting a goal, some people find that seeing the big picture is easy. Others find developing such a global perspective difficult, but they more easily envisage the steps required to achieve the goals and so prefer to work with smaller details.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Chunk size refers to the scale at which a person prefers to work in relation to a task. A person with a *global* preference breaks tasks into larger chunks than a *detail* person, who needs to have a task chunked down into smaller, more manageable steps.

If you prefer to work at a global or conceptual level and have trouble dealing with details, you prefer a big-picture outline of what you're about to be taught when you learn something new. If your presenter launches straight into the details of the subject, you may have difficulty understanding the new topic. You see the forest easily enough but get confused by the mass of trees. If you prefer working globally, that is, with the big picture, you may find yourself switching off or getting impatient with the amount of information that a detail-inclined presenter may give you.

TIP

When training other people, give an overview of the course before going on to talk about the specifics, to avoid losing the globally inclined people before you even get started.

If, on the other hand, you prefer eating the elephant a bite at a time, you have a predisposition for handling details. You may find that sharing the vision of someone who thinks globally is difficult. Detail people handle information in sequential steps and may have trouble getting their priorities right because they're unable to make the more general connections to other areas within which they're working. These people are very good in jobs that require close attention to detail, especially over a period of time — for instance working on an assembly line, conducting tests in a laboratory, or taking on roles in legal and insurance departments.

WARNING

Detail people tend to dive straight into working on a task without looking at the impact of the steps on the final, desired goal. As a result, they may not meet the actual goal or they may see the goal only after a great deal of time and energy has been spent following the steps and reaching the wrong goal.

When Romilla worked in IT, weekly meetings at one multinational company were interesting, to say the least. The manager had a global preference and, unfortunately, one of the programmers always presented his progress in minute detail. The rest of the team had great difficulty keeping a straight face as the manager's expression demonstrated incomprehension, boredom, and blatant irritation in successive stages until he finally snapped at one of the project leaders, "Explain what he means." Fortunately, the project leader was somewhere in the middle of the chunk–size range and was able to translate the details for the manager. The poor programmer sweated buckets before the meetings, and his stress levels rose unbearably prior to them.

If the programmer had known the reason for his miscommunication with his boss, he may have reverse–engineered his work. Instead of talking about the code he was writing, he could have spoken, briefly, about the results his work was producing and how it was affecting the project for which the manager was responsible.

When you're procrastinating over a particular task, the problem may be that you're overwhelmed by the size of the job to be done. Use the following process to break the task into manageable chunks:

1. **Stop!**

   If you're not already paralyzed into inaction, that is.

2. **Open notes on your phone.**

3. **Sit down and make a list.**

   Think about, and write down, what's really important to you.

FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, AND PROCRASTINATION

Along with fight and flight, freezing is part of the stress mechanism. An impala caught by a cheetah goes into a state of hyperarousal and freezes. The survival response behind this mechanism is to make the cheetah believe the impala is dead, thereby giving the impala an opportunity for escape if the cheetah stows it away for later consumption. The other reason for this survival response is that the impala doesn't feel the pain of being torn apart if the cheetah decides on an immediate feast.

Procrastination is the human equivalent of a freeze response. Are you in the habit of procrastinating? It may be that you're taking on too much and just don't know where to start.

4. **Rearrange the list in order of importance.**

   You may want to transfer some of the points to another list of actions.

5. **Get cracking!**

To discover where on the scale between global and detail someone is located, ask about a recently completed project. A detail person gives a step-by-step account, for example:

> Lee and I met for lunch on the second Tuesday last July. I remember having to ask Lee a lot of questions because he kept jumping all over the place, and I had to keep him focused on each step. I was very nervous at first but felt much happier when we'd spent time on capturing all the information in a project plan.

With a global preference, a person will present things randomly, summarizing the outcome, for example:

> Aiden and I met for lunch last year sometime and decided to work on building the animal sanctuary. It's really important to focus on the biodiversity. I really think people need help managing their circumstances, don't you?

Here's how you can detect global and detail preferences in language:

» A person who tends to operate from a global perspective responds to words and phrases such as *overview*, "the big picture," "in a nutshell," *generally*, and *essentially*.

» A person at the detail end of the spectrum listens better to someone using words such as *plan*, *precisely*, *schedule*, *specifically*, *first*, *second*, *third* (and so on), *next*, and *before*.

If you're procrastinating because you're afraid of making the wrong decision, running your options through the well-formed conditions (Chapter 4) can help you recognize unconscious fears, uncover possibilities you may not have thought of, and allow you to move forward.

Recognizing Sameness, Sameness with Difference, and Difference

If, when you learn or experience something new, you try to match the information to what you already know, you prefer *sameness*. Maybe you're someone who first notices the similarities in situations and becomes aware of the differences, in

which case you have a *sameness with difference* preference. If, however, you look at what's different from what you already know, you prefer sorting by *difference*.

With a sameness preference, you have a head start with regard to rapport (which we describe in Chapter 6), because rapport is all about matching someone else's physiology and thinking — probably something you do automatically. You tend to delete a lot of incoming information if you can't spot the similarities to previous situations. You may have difficulty in learning something new unless you can find patterns with which you're familiar. For example, learning a new language is easier when you can find similarities with a language you already know; Dutch may be easier for an English speaker than, perhaps, Korean. You don't like change, or even feel threatened by it, and find that adapting to changes in your work and home life is difficult. As a general rule, you dislike initiating major changes and procrastinate about making alterations in your life when a situation gets really difficult. This means that you probably move house or change jobs very infrequently.

With a sameness with difference inclination, you first look for similarities in a situation and then tend to spot the differences. You like the evolutionary approach to change, preferring infrequent major changes and possibly resisting sudden change. To gain greater rapport with these people, try to emphasize things that are the same, followed by what's different; for example, "The work is fairly similar to what you've done; however you're going to be involved with implementing new solutions."

If you prefer a difference meta program, you thrive on change. You love a revolution in your life, thrive on frequent change, and create change just to shake things up a little. As with sameness people, you too tend to delete vast amounts of data, except that in your case you delete information in which you *can't* spot the differences. Some people may find you difficult because of your tendency to always see the other side of the coin. You love learning new things, but fairly superficially, unless you have a need to go into real depth. You have an easy rapport with other people who find focusing on differences easier, but you have to make a conscious effort to find things in common when talking to people who have more sameness or sameness with difference preferences.

A *polarity responder* is someone at the extreme difference end of the sameness/ difference scale. You probably know someone who seems to go out of their way to disagree with you, resists ideas and suggestions put forward by you and the people around them, and always takes the opposite view to anything said. This person is the one who says, "Better watch out for the UVs; they do a lot of damage to your skin" in response to your "What a gloriously sunny day; it feels good to be alive."

Don't give up hope of dealing with a polarity responder. You can use an elegant way to disarm them while you add an embedded command (see Chapter 16 for more on these). The simplest way is to say something along the lines of, "I suspect you might not agree but. . . ." Using *not agree* instead of *disagree* allows you to slip in an embedded command — agree — and using the word *but* helps emphasize what follows while simultaneously negating or diluting what went before.

Every negative has a positive, however, and remaining mindful of how you react to someone is useful. A polarity responder may offer you a different perspective, perhaps one you hadn't previously considered. You might miss a valuable point if you're predisposed to shut them down before they can make their point.

TIP

One of Romilla's close family members sorts by differences. Until Romilla discovered NLP, communications were difficult, to say the least. Now Romilla really values this family member's input. When working on a new project, she does all the brainstorming with friends and other family members. When she's worked out a fairly solid idea, she approaches her difference-inclined relative who can identify the omissions and problems the brainstormers overlooked. This process saves a lot of time that would otherwise be wasted in trial and error.

To uncover a person's preferred meta program in a given context, ask about the relationship between their current job and a previous one. A person who sorts for sameness may respond, "There's no difference; I'm still writing programs." A person who runs a sameness-with-difference meta program may respond, "I'm still writing programs for the accounting suite, but now I'm also responsible for supervising three junior programmers." The difference person may respond, "I've been promoted to supervising junior programmers and everything is different."

TRY THIS

Ask someone to describe the relationship between the rectangles in Figure 7-2. Each rectangle is actually the same size, but don't reveal this fact. A person who's operating a sameness meta program may say, "They're all rectangles," or "The rectangles are the same size." A person who runs a sameness-with-difference meta program may respond, "They're all rectangles but one is positioned vertically." A person who has a difference meta program is likely to say, "They're laid out differently."

You can run the same test using three quarters. Place two with their heads up and one with the tail up and ask about the relationship between them.

FIGURE 7-2:
The sameness/
sameness with
difference/
difference game.

Look out for the following words and phrases if you want to identify someone's preferences:

» People with a preference for sameness use words and phrases such as *same*, *similar*, *in common*, *as always*, *static*, *unaltered*, *as good as*, and *identical*.

» People who operate from a sameness-with-difference base use words and phrases such as *the same except*, *better*, *improve*, *gradual*, *increase*, *evolutionary*, *less*, *although*, and *same but the difference is*.

» People who operate at the difference end of the spectrum use words and phrases such as *night and day*, *different*, *altered*, *changed*, *revolutionary*, *completely new*, and *no comparison*. To connect with them, use these phrases and others such as, "I don't know if you agree or not."

Tackling Time Perspectives

We show you in Chapter 13 that your memories have a structure and that they're in some form of a continuum; that is, a timeline linking past, present, and future. In this section, you discover that another dimension exists to the way you think about time — whether you have a propensity to focus more on the past, present, or future. In his book, *The Time Paradox* (Atria Books, 2009), Philip Zimbardo explains how something that's mostly unconscious — your focus on time — has

a huge influence on your life; it affects the way you make decisions and the options that you think are available to you without your even being aware of it (as we describe in Table 7-1).

TABLE 7-1   **Pros and Cons of Past, Present, and Future Focus**

Focus on	Pros	Cons
Past	People who remember their past positively have an appreciation of history and tradition. They have a strong positive identity, and strong foundations of patterns of behavior and of values and beliefs.	People who focus on negative past memories may carry a lot of regret, sadness, and anger and feel less optimistic about the results they expect, and therefore get, in life; they may be afraid to make decisions because of possible damaging consequences.
Present	People who focus on the present can concentrate on the task at hand and get on with the job.	People who are too present-oriented don't learn from past mistakes in their headlong rush to complete a job and move on, and they may not make time to plan for a happy future.
Future	People who focus on the future, but in moderation, can plan and are reasonably hopeful and, therefore, optimistic.	People who are always thinking of the future tend to rush through life, ready for the next experience, but miss out on the treasures that are to be savored by stopping and taking stock of the good around them.

You can spot someone's time preference by listening for the verb tense they use. For example, a past-focused person may use phrases such as *remember*, *when I was younger*, *things were better then*, and *if only I had*. Someone whose focus is on the future may say *when* and *I will*. People who focus on the present adopt the present tense and talk about what's around them, for example *this is the way it is* and *what's happening is this*. To influence people, adapt your language to match the tense they're more prone to using.

TIP If someone is stuck in a past negative experience, agreeing with them is useful (without getting caught up in the drama of the story) because it allows you to lead them into a more positive state. In contrast, disagreeing with them from the start, before attaining a level of rapport, can lead to conflict that detracts from a favorable result.

REMEMBER The positive memories you create today are the positive memories that you can look back on tomorrow.

As with most things in life, the key to success is achieving a balance. When you find yourself dwelling too much on the past, present, or future, make a conscious effort to shift your focus, until doing so becomes second nature.

DEALING WITH A TIME FOCUS CONFLICT IN A MARRIAGE

Although in very well-paid jobs, John and Sandra never seemed able to live within their means and lived from day to day. They didn't budget or plan for things like holidays, house moves, and their retirement. Money was always a bone of contention because it seemed to get frittered away on impulse buys. During a counseling session for couples, they realized that Sandra's focus was on the present while John was always dreaming about the wonderful house they would have, where they'd go on holiday and so on — when they had the money. He had his sights set on the future. When the couple was made aware of the difference in their thinking, they decided, in the short term, to set budget targets and plan treats for themselves, even booking date nights. Setting small goals like this provided practice for making bigger plans. They also gained confidence in managing their finances as they recognized they could save money without having to give up things they enjoyed doing.

John still struggled to get Sandra to think beyond the month's plans. During the course of further counselling sessions, Sandra realized that the reason she "lived for the day" was because her father had lost his business, and she'd witnessed him crying and saying to his wife, "I thought I'd got it all planned, but what's the use of planning?" The shock of seeing her strong dad crying stunned Sandra, and his words went straight into her unconscious, preventing her from making plans in her own life. Sandra learned that, although nothing is set in stone, her unconscious memory of the past was stopping her from creating a comfortable future for herself and John. Although she still finds that trusting in the future is difficult, she's at least aware of her fears and doesn't put up barriers when John wants to make plans.

If you tend to focus more on past events or daydream about the future, and you want to enjoy your experiences of the present, train yourself to stop and take a really good look around your environment. (Mindfulness training can be very helpful in shifting your ability to focus on the present moment.) Notice the people around you, the layout of a room, or what you see out of a window. Or, if you're outside, take a look at the space between the branches and leaves of the trees, the color of the sky, and the shapes of the clouds and then observe how doing so makes you feel inside.

TIP Learning lessons from negative past events can help to release their hold on you. Chapter 13 shows you how to let go of negative emotions and limiting decisions.

Combining Meta Programs

You have a combination of meta programs that you prefer to adopt when you're within your comfort zone. Try to remember that this preference may change depending on the different circumstances in which you find yourself. For instance, a project manager may combine difference, proactive, detail, and toward preferences when at work but choose to be more of a sameness, reactive, global person at home.

Also, realizing that certain combinations of meta programs may fit certain professions better than others is important, as is understanding that many more meta programs are available that may be of use to you.

Would you want the instructor who's taking you on your first skydive to exhibit a high options, global, and difference meta program combination? You may well be a little nervous of being in the hands of someone who decides to skip a couple of the safety checks because the procedure is boring! Would you want your prescription filled by a pharmacist who just wants to see what happens if he adds a couple of drops of the pretty blue liquid to your blood pressure medication? These examples illustrate that jobs work best when people's profiles fit the parameters of those roles. For instance, you may decide that someone who demonstrates a preference for detail, away from and procedures is best suited to fill the vacant position of quality controller in your organization; their meta program matches the requirements of that role.

Developing Your Meta-Program Skills

In Romilla's workshops, meta programs inspire a great deal of interest, probably because attendees realize the power of using the so-called "right" language — that is, the words and phrases that mean the most to the person with whom you're communicating. Using appropriate language allows you to build rapport and get your message heard better than someone who's not as skilled in the art of meta programs.

With this thought in mind, we invite you to develop your abilities by considering the following aspects:

> » Can you identify the meta programs that you run in different areas of your life? This exercise can be particularly useful when you want to model a successful part of your life to improve another aspect of your life that isn't working as well.

If you find that you're better at planning your holidays than at progressing your career, is this discrepancy because you're more proactive, toward, and procedure focused when you come to plan your holiday, but you don't show these tendencies when thinking about your career? Do you feel like a very tiny cog in a very large wheel and hold yourself back from being proactive with regard to your career? Perhaps you allow your boss to dictate your future, which may result from past, negative memories (check out the earlier section "Tackling Time Perspectives"). Working with a coach or therapist would allow you to take on-board the lessons from your past and focus on the future to progress your career by establishing a road map to follow.

Perhaps, after deciding your big career goal, you may need to be more procedure driven to define and attain the steps that get you there. You may also need to focus toward the goal and become more proactive in achieving it.

» If you're having problems with another person, perhaps you're at opposite ends of a meta-program scale. Can you identify the meta programs that you and the other person are using? For example, the global/detail meta programs can cause much grief between people. If you talk about the global, big picture and the person with whom you're communicating is a details person, bite the bullet and chunk down (as we describe in the earlier section "Going Global/Detailed"). Mismatched meta programs can result in a great deal of conflict and miscommunication. So make the effort to listen to the language that people are using and use their words when you're talking to them.

» If you're recruiting a new employee, write down the traits of the ideal candidate when you've identified the roles and responsibilities inherent in the job. Ask yourself what questions you need to ask to establish how well an applicant fits the role, because employing the wrong person for a job can prove very costly. So, if you're employing a tax accountant, you may decide that the person needs to be

- *Proactive* to keep abreast of the changes in tax laws.

- *Procedure and detail driven* to implement the law to the letter.

- *External focused* to be receptive to the government's dictates and his clients' needs.

- *Difference inclined* to spot any discrepancies in people's tax affairs.

Chapter **8**

Pushing the Communication Buttons

When you're engaged in a dialogue, for what percentage of the communication do you think you're responsible? Did you say 50 percent? After all, two people are involved in a dialogue, and so logically each of you has half the responsibility to make and elicit responses, right?

However, if you're familiar with the following NLP presuppositions (which we discuss in detail in Chapter 2), you'd reply that you're 100 percent responsible:

» The meaning of the communication is the response it elicits.

» If what you're doing isn't working, do something different.

» The person with the most flexibility within a system influences the system.

This chapter shows you how to take total responsibility for any communication in which you're involved. We provide tools to help you become more aware of how the people with whom you're communicating are transforming what they receive through their senses and creating an internal representation about what you're

communicating in their minds: what they hear you say and what they see and feel as a result. When you understand their thinking process, you have the means to adapt your words, deeds, and actions so that your message is heard and understood and you thus get the response you want.

Do bear in mind that in this chapter, we're giving you a general overview of how people filter the messages they receive. We explore the filters in more detail in other chapters: For example, Chapter 7 describes the meta programs that you run, and Chapter 15 tells you more about the deletions, distortions, and generalizations that we introduce in this chapter.

REMEMBER

In relation to communication, you need to be aware of just two points:

>> What you intend to communicate isn't necessarily the message that the recipient understands. What's important is that you speak in such a way that your intention is made clear.

>> The internal representation that's being created in the recipient's mind is the result of not only what you're saying and doing but how you're saying it and what you're doing as you speak.

The goal in any communication is to understand others — not to manipulate but to connect honestly *and* to be understood in return. Humans are wired to scan for safety, and at an unconscious level, we often sense whether someone's intentions are genuine. When your intention is ethical, it tends to be felt, even if not consciously noticed. This doesn't guarantee your message will land exactly as you meant it because how it's received will still depend on the other person's filters, experiences, and state of mind, but it makes understanding far more likely. That means their internal picture of what you're saying aligns more closely with yours. The result? Fewer misunderstandings, more trust, and a sense of, "They get me."

As you read this chapter, consider how you can apply what you learn about filters to ensure mutually beneficial communication. We talk about matching and mirroring in Chapter 6. Communication is most effective when you establish rapport with someone because the feeling of being like that person engenders a sense of trust.

WARNING

NLP — especially the communication processes we share with you in this chapter — is a powerful tool. Always check your intention: True influence comes from a place of service and a desire for win–win outcomes — not manipulation or personal gain. You can use your communication skills to get one over on people, but our experience shows us that you can't build long-term, sustainable relationships based on trust if people feel uncomfortable after working with you. Use what you discover in this chapter with care!

Understanding the Process of Communication

The NLP communication model is based on cognitive psychology and was developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

According to the NLP communication model, when people behave in a certain way (their *external behavior*), a chain reaction is set up within you (your *internal response*), which in turn causes you to respond in some way (your *external behavior*), which then creates a chain reaction within the other person (their *internal response*), and the cycle continues. Figure 8-1 shows this chain reaction.
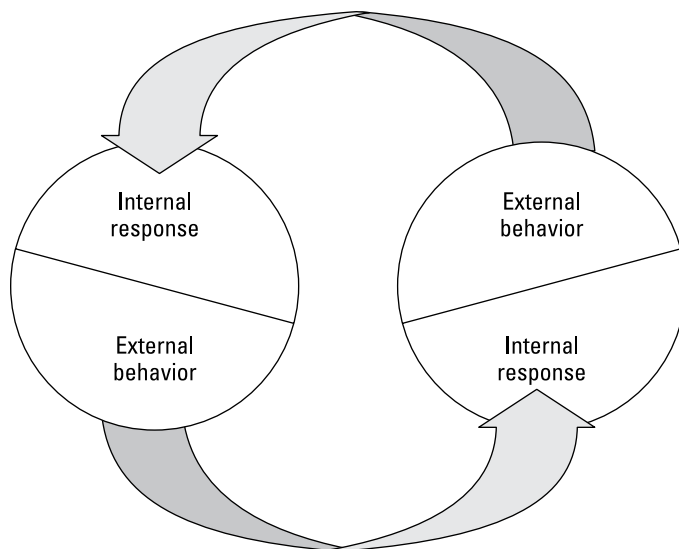
FIGURE 8-1:
The circle of communication.

The internal response is made up of an *internal process* (consisting of self-talk, pictures, and sounds) and an *internal state* (the feelings that are experienced). This is the internal representation that's created in people's minds once they pass the incoming sensory information through their filters.

The following sections present two scenarios that show the NLP communication model in practice.

Scenario 1

For some people, today has been a lovely, hot summer's day. But the air-conditioning in the office wasn't working and Sean has had an awful day. He gets in the car ready to battle his weary way home; with a sigh of relief, he puts on the air-conditioning. His son, Drew, had promised he'd cut the grass. Sean's looking forward to sitting out on a tidy, freshly mown lawn with a cold glass of beer. As he drives up to his house, he notices the grass is *uncut*.

Sean storms into the house, feeling overwhelmed by a sense of anger and resentment. He rants at Drew, "You have such a lousy attitude!" In response Drew retreats into his sullen teenage shell, muttering about the broken lawnmower, a statement that Sean doesn't hear. Finally, Drew yells "Cut the damn grass yourself," as he storms off. Neither person is willing to communicate any more, and both slide down the spiral of shouting, slammed doors, and finally silence.

In this example, when Sean explodes, the uncut grass is the trigger for setting up an internal state of anger, resentment, and frustration. The internal process may be a monologue such as, "He promised. I knew I shouldn't expect anything from him. We always give him the best and he always lets us down." This monologue is accompanied with pictures from the past when Drew didn't live up to Sean's expectations.

Sean's external behavior of ranting at Drew, in that particular tone of voice or with that look on his face, provokes an internal state in Drew. Drew may experience feelings of anger, resentment, and frustration very similar to those felt by Sean. He may make pictures of previous altercations with his father and know that he isn't going to be heard, just like all those other times. Drew's external behavior of adopting his usual, sulking manner and muttering may then further inflame his father . . . and so the process continues.

Scenario 2

Now imagine scenario 2. Sean drives up and sees the uncut grass. Instead of exploding, he recognizes his internal state and how that can affect his behavior. So he takes a deep breath and asks Drew why the grass hasn't been cut. Drew, expecting recrimination, gets defensive as he explains that the mower broke down. From past experience, Sean realizes that Drew is likely to retreat into his shell and so he offers to show Drew how to mend the mower. He chills out with a glass of beer before helping Drew carry out the repairs. Drew mows the lawn before the family sits down to a companionable meal.

In this scenario, the father changes his internal process and makes a conscious effort to remember when he was a teenager himself, in need of guidance and a

firm hand. He decides on the result he wants from his interaction with the teenager and, having disengaged his emotions, is able to proceed down the path that keeps communication channels open in order to achieve the desired outcome: to get Drew to mow the lawn.

This scenario illustrates how, by putting the NLP presuppositions into practice, Sean is able to achieve his outcome of having Drew mow the lawn (for example, the presupposition that "the person with the most flexibility in a system is the winner"). The male bonding is an added bonus. The response he gets from Drew when the teenager starts to become defensive is obviously not the one Sean wants. Sean has the flexibility to recognize Drew's behavior patterns and modify his own responses in order to get his outcome, thereby controlling the system.

Introducing the NLP Communication Model

John Grinder and Richard Bandler discovered that master communicators have three capabilities:

» They know what they want.

» They're very good at noticing the responses they get.

» They have the flexibility to modify their behavior until they get what they want.

ANECDOTE

As a top negotiator, Simon taught Kate some valuable lessons about dealing with people. Simon always manages to keep his cool and usually achieves his outcome even in the most difficult situations. He does so by distancing himself from his emotions and keeping his focus on the result he wants. He also attempts to understand the other person's point of view and "hot buttons" in order to arrive at a win–win result.

Everybody processes information differently and so reacts to situations differently. Wouldn't it be really useful to understand how another person's brain works? Read on for some clues.

Processing pieces of information

Professor George Miller was a pioneer in the field of psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology who conducted research into how many bits of data or "chunks" people can hold in their short-term memory at any given time. He concluded that

a person can hold around seven "chunks" of information — plus or minus two. A chunk might constitute a single number, a word or syllable, or even a familiar phrase. A grouped pattern — like a phone number (555–431–2296) — is typically identified as **three chunks**, not ten individual digits. He came to the conclusion that a person can hold nine bits of data if they're feeling good or have an interest in a subject and as few as five if they're feeling a bit low or aren't particularly interested in what they're trying to remember. If you're not into multitasking, you may have trouble coping with more than one!

Your brain is assailed by millions of bits of information every second of the day. If you tried to deal with this vast array of input, you'd go mad. To preserve your sanity, you filter the incoming information before your brain processes it and makes internal representations from this information (we discuss internal representations more in Chapter 2).

In addition, all your experiences and filters influence the processes by which you create these internal representations of the external events you perceive through your senses.

The external stimuli of the world are converted into internal representations in your brain using three fundamental processes: deletions, distortions, and generalizations. The following sections give you a brief overview of these processes. For more in-depth information, head to Chapter 15.

Deletion

Deletions happen when you pay attention to some information coming in through your senses but are completely oblivious to other stimuli. Think of a nutty professor, so caught up in his work that he leaves home wearing his bedroom slippers.

ANECDOTE

Kate's story about her mother-in-law illustrates nicely how your unconscious mind makes deletions. Usually her mother-in-law put out her rubbish and then returned to the house for her handbag and briefcase. One morning, however, she was running a little late for work and grabbed all three bags together — handbag, briefcase, and garbage bag. Only when she found herself sitting on the bus, thinking that it was really smelly that morning, did she realize that she'd taken her garbage on to the bus with her!

Distortion

A distortion occurs when you misinterpret information coming in through your senses and create meaning from a situation that's not necessarily true — for example, when someone complains that their partner "didn't help me and so that means they don't care." You may see what you want to see to reinforce your viewpoint instead of what's actually in front of your eyes. Distortion can also involve deletion of information.

A cynic may say that being in love is a form of distortion; it makes you starry-eyed behind your rose-tinted spectacles (don't worry about the mixed metaphors!), completely oblivious to the faults of your "perfect" partner. Perhaps you're so keen to find your true love that you ignore aspects of the person's behavior that can ruin the relationship in the long term.

ANECDOTE Romilla was driving down a divided highway late one night when it started to rain: a very fine, misty drizzle. She could see a white, ethereal figure in the distance, by the side of the road. With a pounding heart, the conversation with herself went something like this:

"Oh my goodness, it's a ghost."

"Don't be stupid, ghosts don't exist."

"You know you're being idiotic. It isn't a ghost."

"Yes, it is. What if it's a ghost?"

"But it isn't."

"Yes, it is."

And so on. To Romilla's extreme relief — and also, if she's honest, bitter disappointment — the ghostly figure transpired to be a unhoused person wrapped in white plastic sheeting, looking really spooky in the misty rain.

This anecdote involves distorting an image, but you can also distort the meaning of another person's actions.

ANECDOTE Mei had a male boss, Tom, who, as a result of his cultural background, found dealing with women at work very difficult, and he was very abrupt in his interactions with female employees. Mei misunderstood Tom's behavior and decided Tom didn't like her; she distorted the facts. The situation may have spiraled out of control if Mei hadn't confided her misgivings to another colleague. When Mei understood that Tom's upbringing was responsible for his behavior, she no longer reacted emotionally. As a result, her behavior changed to reflect her confidence in herself, which resulted in an improvement in the way Tom treated her.

Generalization

You make a generalization when you transfer the conclusions you came to from one experience to other, similar situations or occurrences. Imagine that you gave a very good speech that was well received. Afterward, you may form a generalization that you're good at public speaking.

Generalizations can be useful; they help you to build a cognitive map of the world. If you didn't generalize, for example, you'd need to relearn the alphabet and how to put together individual letters every time you read a book. Generalizations allow you to build on what you already know, without reinventing the wheel.

Generalizations can also be limiting. The beliefs you hold about your world are generalizations, and you delete and distort to the best of your ability to hold them in place. So, in other words, your generalizations can become restrictive because they can make you less likely to accept or trust actions and events that don't fit with your preconceived notions.

This tendency can, in turn, lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. Confidence and self-doubt are two sides of a coin. When you feel confident about doing something, you're usually successful because you expect a positive result. Even on the odd occasion when things don't work out quite as you'd wanted, you move on. If you're riddled with self-doubt, however, and convinced something isn't going to work out or no one's going to talk to you when you go to an event, a very high chance exists that your experience goes on to reflect your beliefs. Do you experience a slight disappointment when someone or a situation fails to meet your worst expectations? And do you feel a little triumphant when you're duly disappointed? Sometimes, having your negative generalization confirmed is more satisfying than a situation being better than expected. How self-defeating is that?

Getting to grips with individual responses

When different people are exposed to the same external stimuli, the way they remember the event differs because they attribute different meanings to what happened, and they react differently, in accordance with their maps of the world (Chapter 2 tells you more about these maps). People interpret and give meaning to experiences differently because everyone deletes, distorts, and generalizes differently based on their life experiences and the resulting meta programs, values, beliefs, attitudes, memories, and decisions. We discuss these responses in the next few sections.

Meta programs

Meta programs, which we describe in more detail in Chapter 7, are filters. They're the way in which you reveal your patterns of behavior through your language. For instance, someone who's inclined to take charge and get things done (meaning that they display more proactive tendencies) may be heard to say, "Don't give me excuses; just give me results." In contrast, someone who's likely to take their time thinking things over before acting (a reactive tendency) is likely to say, "Don't rush; think about all the factors and make sure that the results are right."

If these leanings are abused and combined with a tendency to generalize, you may end up pigeonholing people; for example, "You mean Tom, that geeky introvert?" (distortion) or "Yeah, typical salesman, always in your face" (generalization). Remember, however, that people can change their behavior patterns, depending on the environment and the situation in which they find themselves.

Table 8-1 offers a little taster on introvert/extrovert tendencies and how they affect your filtration process. Both of these tendencies are basic meta programs. Although your meta programs are there in the background, you tend to have a proclivity to focus on certain aspects of particular meta programs, depending on different situations. For example, think of social interactions and how a gregarious person behaves as opposed to someone who's more solitary.

An introvert isn't superior to an extrovert, and an extrovert is as good as an introvert. A person can also exhibit both tendencies. Sometimes you may need to get out and meet people, while at other times you prefer quiet reflection to recharge your batteries.

A useful way to think about how meta programs work is to imagine a sliding scale with a tendency toward one aspect or another at a certain time and in a particular setting (as illustrated in Figure 8-2).

TABLE 8-1 **Comparison of Introvert and Extrovert Meta Programs**

Introverts	Extroverts
Want to be alone to recharge their batteries	Need to have people around when in need of rest and relaxation
Have a few friends with whom they have a deep connection	Have a lot of friends and acquaintances with whom they connect at a more superficial level
May take a real or imagined slight to heart	May not notice the slight and if they do may attribute it to the other person having a bad day
Are interested in a few topics, which they know in great detail	Know about a lot of things, but not in as much detail as an introvert
Tend to be more solitary	Tend to be more gregarious
Need time to think before they voice opinions in a group	Find the energy of a group situation enables them to form opinions and voice them quickly

FIGURE 8-2: Meta programs work along a sliding scale.
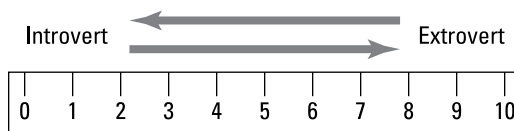
At work, where you're confident and enjoy the environment, you may find yourself behaving like an extrovert. This tendency allows your antennae to pick up a broader band of information and has you noticing contacts and opportunities that help you in your job. When meeting your colleagues in a social setting, however, you may feel very uncomfortable and slide along the scale to display more introverted tendencies. As a result of your discomfort, you may delete subtle messages that would be very obvious to you in your familiar office environment.

TIP

Extroverts can really annoy their more introverted friends and acquaintances. So, extroverts, please take care to tone things down when you meet people who aren't as responsive as you are, and be careful not to encroach on their body space! Likewise, introverts be aware that your failure to make conversation can appear unfriendly or disinterested rather than a simple need to be quiet.

ANECDOTE

At a party, an extrovert female NLP nerd (who plays at NLPing with everyone and everything, all the time) chased a poor introvert all around the room. She invaded the body space of the introvert who kept moving away only to have his body space encroached upon again.

If you veer toward the extrovert side of the scale, remember to show some restraint in the use of your verbal, vocal, and physical exuberance when dealing

with a person who shows more introverted tendencies. Likewise, if you lean toward the introvert end of the scale, you may find it easier to build rapport with an extrovert if you show more enthusiasm in your movements and words.

REMEMBER

Be aware of words, tonality and body movements and use them to match those of the person with whom you're communicating.

TRY THIS

Remembering that people can show different tendencies in different settings, do you recognize where you sit on this scale? Can you assess your friends and family members in this way? Here's a tip: The answer to the question "Do you prefer company or being alone when you need to recharge your batteries?" provides a very strong clue to a person's tendencies.

Some people with an extrovert preference may have a very strong bond with their pets and seek out the company of their four-legged friends rather than other humans when recharging!

Values

Your values are also unconscious filters, although not to the same degree as the meta programs that we describe in the preceding section. You learn your values, almost by osmosis, from your parents and close family members until the age of seven, and thereafter from your peers and friends. Values are what motivate you to do something, but they can also work as brakes, stopping you from achieving your desires. They are the factors that are important to you and let you assess whether something that you're considering doing, or have done, is good or bad. They influence how you delete, distort, or generalize data from incoming stimuli.

Examples of values are health, wealth, honesty, friendship, and job satisfaction. Values are arranged in a hierarchy, with the most important at the top of the ladder. (You can find out more about values in Chapter 3.)

ANECDOTE

James worked for a charity helping to organize an education program in Africa. He had a young family and loved his work. Although he was as poor as a church mouse, the charity took care of all his day-to-day living needs. His values hierarchy was satisfied by his work and looked something like this:

1. Enriching lives
2. Being with my family
3. Freedom
4. Variety
5. Support network

These values were obtained by asking James "What's important to you about your work?"

Because James's values were being satisfied, he didn't pay attention (deletion) to any job advertisements that would offer him greater monetary reward, thinking they'd detract from the other aspects of his work that he valued. He admits that he bought into the distortion held by the locals that all (generalization) Western interests in Africa were aimed at exploiting the local people. Later, however, he did realize that in some cases, this view was simply an excuse by some people not to take responsibility for their own lives.

REMEMBER

Values can be contextual, which means that some of your values apply only in certain areas of your life and that their importance in the hierarchy also changes depending on which aspect of your life you're examining. They are, however, a useful compass to assess what makes someone content with their life and drives their choices. James's values, from the preceding anecdote, were relevant to the work he was involved in at the time.

ANECDOTE

During a deep relaxation, Elijah remembered his parents discussing their landlord increasing the rent on their house. He recalled how worried his parents sounded. He realized that he'd formed a limiting belief then, at the age of six, that all rich people are greedy and bad (also a generalization).

Understanding and matching someone's values is crucial to building rapport and communicating with them so that they're more receptive to your message.

Speaking to Elijah about money when he was working for the charity may have proven unproductive. Not simply because it wasn't on his radar but also because of his limiting belief regarding rich people.

Beliefs

Beliefs are really powerful; they can propel you to the heights of success or drag you to the depths of failure.

Your beliefs are formed in all kinds of unconscious ways. You learn that you're gifted from your parents, that you can't draw from your teacher, that you must support your friends from your peers, and so on. In some cases, as with the teacher, when you're told that you can't draw, you delete any opportunities you may have to find out how to draw. After all, one teacher told you that you can't draw. (Kate can vouch for this. She was told at age 12 that she couldn't be in the school choir with her friends because she wasn't musical enough and spent many years believing she shouldn't sing out loud.)

Beliefs can begin like a "splinter in your mind" (as Morpheus says to Neo in *The Matrix*). As that splinter irritates and niggles, you begin to find instances that validate it, and over a period of time, you develop a concrete belief.

Chapter 15 goes into much more detail about how you can listen for and uncover people's beliefs to understand more about their filters.

WARNING

Choose your beliefs very carefully because they tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies!

Attitudes

Your attitude is your way of thinking about a topic or perhaps a group of people: It tells others how you're feeling or your state of mind about someone or something. Your attitude is an unconscious filter and is formed by a collection of values, beliefs, and opinions around a particular subject. Changing an attitude is challenging because your unconscious mind is actively involved in building and holding on to attitudes.

You can gain some awareness of other people's attitudes from what they say and how they behave. At work, someone who goes the extra mile and has a positive frame of mind is considered to have a good attitude to their work, whereas a slacker or malingerer may be seen as having a bad attitude to work.

Because your attitude is based on your values and beliefs, it affects your abilities by making you behave in certain ways. Someone with a positive attitude may always expect to get a positive outcome, and by demonstrating a pleasant and helpful demeanor, that person influences others to behave in a similar vein and . . . surprise! Always gets a positive outcome.

TRY THIS

Next time you're with someone who's prone to whining, experiment by getting them to catch your positive attitude virus. If they're moaning about their tax bill, ask them if they'd rather live on the street, because the unhoused people definitely don't pay taxes. If this person begins Monday mornings feeling miserable about all the work that lies ahead, remind them how good Friday afternoons feel when the work's done. If you hear them making negative comments about a colleague, say something positive about the victim. Tell the whiner that people who have a positive attitude to life are less stressed and live longer. You may ultimately catch this downer doing something good, giving you the opportunity to praise them!

BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS: SAME NEEDS, DIFFERENT STYLES

How often do you hear baby boomers or Gen Xers complain about the so-called bad attitude of millennials — describing them as feckless, unreliable, or unable to concentrate? (You'll see this dynamic play out in the example of Drew and Dan at the start of the chapter.) These sweeping generalizations can quickly create conflict when teams are working across generations.

The truth is, each generation shares the same fundamental needs — purpose, connection, and fulfilment. What differs is *how* they meet those needs. Younger generations, including millennials and Gen Z, often value collaboration, fast feedback, flexibility, and being involved in shaping what they're part of. They may push back against rigid authority, but they thrive when given clear direction, autonomy, and space to experiment.

Managing or working with younger generations isn't about control; it's about *connection*. The most effective communicators drop the stereotypes, listen without judgment, and adapt their style to meet people where they are. That's good leadership — with any generation.

At the risk of generalizing, millennials and Gen Z tend to be highly connected, quick to collaborate through digital platforms, and accustomed to instant access. They're not fans of being told what to do, but they're often open to guidance — especially when they've helped create the process. Tools like Slack, Teams, or project-based messaging apps help maintain communication and boost cohesion. The key is understanding what drives them, not judging how they work.

Memories

Your memories determine what you anticipate and how you behave and communicate with other people. Memories from your past can affect your present and your future. (You can discover more about the power of memories in Chapter 13.) The problem occurs when your memories don't stay in the order in which they were recorded. When memories get jumbled up, they bring with them the emotions you experienced at the time. Your current experience invokes old memories, and you then find yourself responding to those rather than what's happening now.

Tamara's supervisor Sheila was an awful woman who bullied her. When a very relieved Tamara found a new job, she was surprised to discover that her immediate boss was also named Sheila. The combination of her name and position of seniority meant that Tamara took a lot of convincing that the second Sheila was, in fact, a lovely person and, until she was able to accept this reality, she was very wary of her. If her memories of the first Sheila had been kept in the correct order — firmly in the past — Tamara wouldn't have re-experienced the negative emotions in the present. She made generalizations and distortions about the second Sheila from her experiences with the first.

Decisions

Your decisions are closely linked to your memories and affect all areas of your life. This ability is especially important with regard to decisions that limit the options you feel you have in life — what NLP calls *limiting decisions*. Examples of limiting decisions include, "I can't spell," "money is the root of all evil, so to be good I mustn't be rich," and "if I go on a diet, I won't be able to enjoy my food."

Many of your limiting decisions are made unconsciously, some when you're very young, and may be forgotten. As you grow and develop, your values may change, and you need to recognize and reassess any decisions that may be hindering you. In Chapter 13, you can discover how to release limiting decisions.

In the "Values" section earlier in this chapter, we talk about James, who worked in Africa for several years. To pick up that story, when he returned to England, he was even poorer than a church mouse because now he had to provide for his family without the help of the charity for which he'd worked. On thinking about their circumstances, he drew up a new hierarchical set of values, as follows:

1. Enriching lives
2. Being with my family
3. Security
4. Financial freedom
5. Variety

When he decided that he needed financial freedom, he realized that the decision he'd made (rich people = greedy = bad) when he was a child was hampering his ability to provide for his family. He thus considered how he could earn good money, help people, and stay close to his family. Today, James is extremely happy, very wealthy, and enriching lives. How? He studied for his PhD in psychology and now runs workshops around the world, traveling with his wife.

Giving Effective Communication a Try

As the earlier sections in this chapter show, much of the way you think and behave is unconscious; your values, beliefs, memories, and so on influence your responses. Fortunately, you don't have to be at the mercy of your unconscious mind.

With awareness, you can take control of how you communicate with people, which is a liberating and empowering thought in itself! Just keep these pointers in mind:

>> **Engage your brain before your mouth:** Think of the result you want when you're interacting with people and speak and behave with that desired outcome in mind.

>> **Tread softly:** Having this knowledge gives you power — and power can corrupt. Power can also, however, free you from fear. Power allows you to work with generosity and kindness, so that knowledge of someone else's model of the world allows you to create a win–win outcome.

Communicating on the Internet or presenting to an unknown audience can be tricky. As with any marketing activity, knowing your audience is crucial. You can read people's blogs, listen to them on YouTube, and join forums through which to discover their values, opinions, and meta programs — then you can replicate them in your own presentations, videos, and blogs. You can communicate through any medium when you understand how communication works!

3
Opening the Toolkit

IN THIS PART . . .

Encounter the core tools and techniques of NLP that can enable you to cope with difficult situations.

Discover how to adapt your own thoughts and actions to stay in control.

Build your NLP repertoire for excellence.

Chapter **9**

Dropping Anchors

"I just don't know what came over me!" Are these familiar words? Ever had that feeling that your reactions to a situation have been way in excess of what was called for? Your feelings may have overtaken or even overwhelmed you. Perhaps you even say that you weren't quite yourself.

Experiencing emotional responses is a regular occurrence for everyone: some are great — falling in love, joy, excitement, and pleasure — others less so — falling out of love, sadness, anxiety, and pain. These experiences and feelings are what make life and work interesting and fun, as well as confusing and unpredictable. Often, in our work, we talk to managers who sigh and say if only their colleagues would leave their emotions at home. And at home, many people would prefer that their partners leave their workplace stresses at work.

Maybe you've witnessed someone "blowing a fuse" unexpectedly. Often this event happens at what, on the face of it, seems the slightest provocation. Most people can identify with the discomfort or agitation of being in "a bit of a state." In fact, NLP uses the term *state* to mean to examine, and become more aware of, how you feel at any moment in time.

Taken to extremes, these feelings of being overwhelmed and being out of control scare people. They affect your career, social life, and mental health. People question whether such a person can be trusted in responsible situations or when they have to represent the company.

Fortunately, with the stabilizing influence of the NLP toolkit, help for controlling yourself, controlling your state, and affecting other people is at hand. And when you discover how to do so, the effect is fantastic.

Starting Out with NLP Anchors

NLP uses *anchoring* techniques to help you create positive states within yourself, based on the principle of a boat's anchor that provides stability in open water. NLP defines an *anchor* as an external stimulus that triggers a particular internal state or response. People set anchors and respond to them all the time; for example, you know to stop your car at a red traffic light, and you find that certain foods get you licking your lips.

You may be wondering why anchors are helpful. The answer is that, when you discover how to anchor, you can take all your positive experiences and memories and use them to deal with challenging situations more resourcefully. You may be aware that you can recall difficult times much more easily than the good times. Typically, the brain finds it easier to access negative memories: anchoring provides extra help to access the feel-good moments. (You can read more about memories and the brain in Chapter 3.)

The idea of using anchoring in NLP came from modeling the techniques of the hypnotherapist Milton Erickson. Erickson often used cues as triggers to help people change their internal state. In the work of NLP cocreator John Grinder on NewCode NLP (see Chapter 1), great emphasis is placed on getting both client and practitioner into positive states, such as a "high-performance state" or a "know-nothing state."

FROM TWITMYER TO PAVLOV — OR HOW IT ALL STARTED

What the Russian psychologist Pavlov found out with his famous dog experiments was an early example of anchoring. Set a stimulus — food — and get a consistent response — salivation. Pair the sound of a bell — the conditioned stimulus — with placing the food in the dog's mouth, and soon the dog learns to respond to the bell.

Pavlov's less well-known colleague, Twitmyer, was examining the human knee-jerk reflex in 1902, before Pavlov studied salivation in dogs. As Twitmyer dropped a hammer on someone's knee, a bell sounded. Like so many discoveries in science, a single

accidental change in an experiment leads to the most exciting breakthroughs. One day he rang the bell without dropping the hammer. And guess what? Yes, the subject's knee reacted to the sound of the bell alone.

Unfortunately for Twitmyer, he was slightly ahead of his time and the medics of the day ignored his contribution to the science of *behaviorism* (the theory of personality that ignores the inner workings of the mind and focuses on how people are conditioned to respond to stimulation in their environment.) Fast-forward the story a couple of years to 1904 and Pavlov's work on dogs grabbed people's attention and won him the Nobel Prize in Physiology.

Today, studies of animal behavior are increasingly more scientific and sophisticated. Every day you can read new research on the brain and increase your knowledge of human intelligence and behavior.

REMEMBER

Humans discover and develop behavior in response to a stimulus — dolphins aren't the only ones who can learn amazing tricks! From conception, you're programmed to respond to certain stimuli, and you constantly move and change your state in response to your environment, demonstrating an incredible flexibility of behavior.

Setting an anchor and building yourself a resourceful state

Memories are stored as associations with the senses. Smells are particularly powerful anchors to times and events. So, for example, you smell a particular aroma, and it transports you back to your first date and splashing on the perfume or aftershave. Or if you've ever been drunk on whisky, perhaps the smell of it alone is enough to make you feel nauseous. People create positive and negative anchors for themselves all the time.

NLP teachers suggest various techniques for setting an anchor. Here is a typical, simple three-step NLP technique that we use in coaching to help clients take control of their own state by establishing resourceful anchors:

1. **Be clear about the positive state you ideally want to be in.**

   Your positive state may be bold, witty, energetic, anticipatory, or enthusiastic. Be clear and specific in your own words to describe it.

2. **Recall a specific occasion in the past when you've been in that state.**

   You're looking for a comparable experience, even though the context can be very different.

3. **Relive the experience as vividly as you can.**

> Engage fully with the experience — the sights, sounds, smells, physical feelings, and internal sensations.

When you've followed these three steps and are in the highest positive state, that's the moment to set an anchor for yourself. Hand movements work well as a physical (kinesthetic) anchor. Simply notice what your hands are doing as you engage with the experience and make a distinct gesture — such as a clenched grip, or thumb and first finger in a circle. (A handshake doesn't work because it's too mundane and habitual.) Alternatively, as an auditory anchor, listen for a sound. For those with a visual preference, create an image that symbolizes the positive state.

When you need to get back into a positive state, you simply fire the anchor for yourself as a stimulus to change your state. To do so, recreate the physical movement or remember the sound or image that you used as a trigger for the positive state. Another method for establishing resourceful anchors is the classic NLP "circle of excellence" exercise, described later in this chapter in the "Deploying stage anchors" section.

REMEMBER

Anchors need to have the following attributes:

» **Distinctive:** Different from everyday movements, sounds, or pictures

» **Unique:** Special to you

» **Intense:** Set when you fully and vividly experience the peak of the state

» **Timely:** Catching the best moment to make the association

» **Reinforced:** Use it or you lose it; anchoring is a skill to develop with practice

WARNING

Accidentally establishing a *negative anchor* is all too easy. When you're stressed, the part of your brain called the amygdala, which is responsible for emotions, reacts to the threat response and reduces the energy available for responding creatively. Negative experiences can quickly become hardwired in the prefrontal cortex. Consider the case of a highly stressed person who deals with several problematic phone calls during their drive home from work. As they enter their house, their negative feelings about work peak. At that moment, their partner comes with a welcome-home kiss. The poor person may unintentionally connect a kiss from their partner with work worries because anchors are established in this way. Now, guess what? When this person gets a kiss from their partner, they begin to feel anxious but they don't know why.

Common sense suggests that you wouldn't deliberately set out to establish a negative anchor. So how can you avoid doing so? The key lies in recognizing what triggers a negative response in you and realizing that you have a choice regarding how you respond. To release productive energy, it's important to keep the more positive emotions, such as love, joy, and trust, in play. You can make changes by learning to fire off a positive anchor or to adapt your strategy. (Chapter 12 helps you find new strategies.)

Eliciting and calibrating states

Do you know when someone else is in a happy, positive state? What are the signals? When you meet someone and are building a relationship — socially or in business — knowing how to calibrate them is useful.

NLP defines *calibration* as the process of discovering how to read other people's responses. Good communicators learn how to heighten their skills of observation. Instead of guessing how somebody else is feeling, they notice and recognize the subtle cues and facial expressions of the people they mix with.

For example, if you know that your boss goes quiet and clenches his facial muscles when faced with a tough deadline, you're well advised to avoid a chatty social conversation when you spot those signs. Similarly, if you're negotiating a business deal, take time to get to know the people with whom you're negotiating. Friendly, social questions asked at the coffee machine or in the lift can help you calibrate people's body language and develop your awareness of their responses.

Try this quick game with a friend to calibrate their states. As you do so, notice the changes in their physiology — what happens to their facial movements and whether their face changes color — goes pale or flushes — as well as their body language:

TRY THIS

1. **First notice your friend's starting position — to check what they look like in neutral.**

   To get the person into a neutral state, ask a mundane silly question such as, "What color are your socks today?" or "How many pens do you keep in your desk drawer?"

2. **Ask your friend to think for a minute about someone they really like, whose company they enjoy — paying attention to any pictures, sounds, or feelings that arise.**

   Give the person time to really get into the experience.

3. **Get your friend to stand up and shake that feeling out.**

   NLP calls this action *breaking state*.

4. **Ask your friend to think for a minute about someone they really dislike, whose company they don't enjoy — paying attention to any pictures, sounds, or feelings that arise.**

5. **Observe your friend and compare the differences in their reaction to a positive and a negative experience.**

Some people may demonstrate a dramatic change in their body language, whereas for others, the differences may be so subtle that you're hard pressed to spot them.

REMEMBER

An NLP presupposition goes as follows: People can't *not* communicate. Like it or not, you're continually influencing other people. With just a look or a word, you have the skill to elicit states in other people and in yourself, and it happens so easily — just by being yourself and doing what you do, with no conscious effort.

TIP

When somebody, such as a boss, parent, teacher, or partner, praises you, tells you off, or expresses joy or disappointment, you recognize that they uses a particular tone of voice. Well, your own tone of voice also acts as an anchor. Varying your tone of voice is a way to change other people's states. Try out this technique when

you want to change the state of an audience or an individual person you're talking to — sometimes you may need to be animated, at other times authoritative, calm, or restful.

Developing your own repertoire of anchors

One great way to work with NLP concepts is to find optimal states for yourself, that is, the best way for you to be yourself. The idea is to develop this ability in the same way that you may acquire a repertoire of tennis or golf shots. To start, ask yourself what may be the best way for you to do the following:

» Learn effectively

» Perform at your best

» Relate to other people

Remember times in the past when you've been particularly successful in these areas. What was going on for you at the time? Where were you, who were you with and what were you doing at the time that was helpful? What was important to you?

Build a range of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic anchors that make you feel good about yourself and other people. You may want to enlist the help of a friend and work with each other on this project.

Recognizing your own anchors

What are the triggers, the stimuli, that affect you most at home or work? Make a note in the chart shown in Figure 9-1 so that you begin to become aware of the times when you're feeling good and when you feel less good. Your aim is to concentrate more on your positive experiences and change or let go of the negatives.

Take some time to record details of different experiences that make you feel good or bad. These experiences can be seemingly insignificant everyday events and are bound to be very individual.

At home, you may feel good in response to the sight of a log fire or a vase of tulips on the table, the sound of your favorite music tracks, or the smell of a hot meal on the kitchen stove. Equally, the sight of your tidy work area, the buzz of people, or the smell of a steaming hot drink may welcome you to work in the morning.

	AT HOME		AT WORK	
	Good	Bad	Good	Bad
V—Sights				
A—Sounds				
K—Touch/feelings				
O—Smells				
G—Tastes				

FIGURE 9-1:
A personal anchor chart:
V = visual;
A = auditory;
K = kinesthetic;
O = olfactory; and
G = gustatory.

Alternatively, if you get angry when someone turns the TV up too loud or another email or customer request arrives, you may need to find some strategies to switch the negatives into positives. Only when you identify what you do and don't like can you start steering the minute details of your daily experience in the best direction for you.

We've organized the chart in Figure 9-1 by the different senses (head to Chapter 5 for more on these modalities). Here are some anchors to notice:

» **Visual:** Pictures, colors, decoration

» **Auditory:** Music, voices, birdsong, sounds

» **Kinesthetic:** Textures, feel of the physical elements, emotional vibes

» **Olfactory:** Smells, chemicals, scents

» **Gustatory:** Tastes, food, drink

Your anchors are going to change over time. As you increasingly concentrate on the things that give you pleasure, you may begin to notice that those that upset you become less relevant.

TRY THIS

Here's an exercise that you may want to turn into a healthy daily habit. As you go through every day, pick out five events or experiences that have given you pleasure. Keep a note (maybe on your phone) of what's going well for you. Often, the small things are what make the difference — a pleasant conversation, a kind gesture, the smell of a bakery, or the sun breaking through the clouds. When you're feeling under pressure, refer to your checklist, and ensure that you spend at least part of every day on the important things that matter to you.

Going through the Emotions: Sequencing States

Think back to yesterday. As you review the events of the day, ask yourself how you felt at different times. Were you in the same state all day? Unlikely. Just as with a temperature gauge, you may have blown hot or cold or experienced all the dimensions on the scale; you may have been cool and calm, warm and interested, hot and excited, plus any number of permutations along the way.

Humans are blessed with behavioral flexibility and the wonderful ability to change state. In fact, you need to shift states. If you operate on a constant high, you soon become exhausted. To avoid burnout, peak performers have to be able to switch off and regenerate, to recharge their batteries. During a presentation, for example, varying the pace and rhythm is important so that your audience remains interested. At different points, you want those people to be relaxed and receptive to what you're saying, highly alert to the details, or curious and interested.

While working in one-to-one coaching sessions and facing up to difficult problems, clients regularly demonstrate a full range of emotions — from extreme anger, frustration, and worry to pleasure derived from laughing — all within a very short space of time. When the going gets tough and people are experiencing myriad emotions, it's not unusual for someone to exclaim, "I don't know whether to laugh or cry!"

Humor offers an incredibly resourceful and valuable way to change state. For example, cartoon characters often take a serious subject and show it in a new light, allowing you to see your own experience from a different perspective. The skill of any leader — whether as parent or manager — lies in their ability to pace somebody through these different states and lead that person to a positive outcome.

Altering states with anchors

Your states are constantly shifting, and the value of anchors is that they enable you to change your state to a more resourceful one when you need to. Say, for example, you have a difficult decision to make, a person to meet, or an event to attend. At weddings and funerals, emotions run high and you may want to manage your feelings closely. By being in the right state, you can make the best choices and act for the best result.

As an analogy, imagine that you're sailing a dinghy in a storm, and you want to reach a safe harbor. By developing the ability to fire anchors, you can secure a calm state for yourself or switch to an energetic, risk-taking mode as necessary.

An anchor, by definition, is attached to a stable position; it keeps you safe and stops you floating away. Strength and stability are the keynotes here.

Whenever you notice that you're not in a "good" state, you have a choice. You either stick with this uncomfortable state because, for some reason, you get some value out of it, or you decide that you prefer to identify and shift into a "better" state. To do the latter, you can fire off an anchor to create a more positive state for yourself. (Flip to the earlier section "Setting an anchor and building yourself a resourceful state" for how to do so easily, in just three steps, and see Chapter 5 for more on resourcefulness.)

WARNING

Constantly overriding negative anchors with positive ones can lead to problems. Negative anchors can be one way that the unconscious mind indicates to you that you need to work on an underlying issue. For example, feeling tired may be an indication that your current work patterns are exhausting you or that you haven't acknowledged difficult periods of grief and sadness. If you continue to override warning signs with an energetic anchor, you can make yourself ill.

Getting with the baroque beat

The Ancient Greeks knew it, early psychologists used it, and modern science confirms it: Music affects both mind and body. Music alters the brainwaves that demonstrate the electrical activity in your brain. When you're relaxed, your brainwaves are slower, and they speed up as you become more energized. Music with around 60 beats per minute seems to be the most comfortable across cultures because it corresponds to the beat of the human heart at rest.

Baroque music is especially suitable for creating a state of relaxed awareness, known as the alpha state. To explore this kind of music, look out for the largo and adagio passages in pieces composed between about 1600 and 1750 — Bach, Mozart, Handel, and Vivaldi all offer good starting points.

BRAINWAVES, FROM ALPHA TO DELTA

You have four types of brainwave, measured in cycles per second:

- Alpha brainwaves: Clear, calm, and relaxed — 8–12 cycles per second

- Beta brainwaves: Alert and problem-solving — 13–30 cycles per second

- Theta brainwaves: Creative and imaginative — 4–9 cycles per second

- Delta brainwaves: Deep sleep — fewer than 6 cycles per second

Here are some different ways to think about the music you play. Perhaps your listening taste is stuck in a groove:

» **Create a mix of playlists that you listen to:** From baroque to classical, jazz and blues to reggae, or pop and rock to opera.

» **Change the rhythm:** Compare predictable rhythms with varied and unfamiliar ones to encourage your creativity. World music is a good choice here.

» **Choose either instrumental or vocal:** Words can distract; solo instruments tend to encourage relaxation.

» **Trust your intuition:** Follow your own tastes. Don't struggle with a piece of music you dislike; turn it off because it's unlikely to make you feel good.

» **Start the day differently:** When you feel good in the morning, you get off to a flying start. Try swapping the confrontational news channel on the radio for inspiring podcasts and uplifting music.

Here's an exercise to help you work through an issue with the help of music:

1. **Think of an issue or a decision that's bothering you — rate it on a worry scale of 1 to 10 and note the score on a piece of paper.**

2. **Select three pieces of music of very different styles, from mellow to lively.**

   For example, try some baroque, jazz instrumentals, heavy rock, or soft vocals.

3. **Play the first piece of music while thinking about your issue and then rate your thoughts on a scale of 1 to 10; make a note of how you now see the issue and feel about it.**

4. **Play the second piece of music while thinking about your issue and then rate your thoughts on a scale of 1 to 10; make a note of how you now see the issue and feel about it.**

5. **Play the third piece of music while thinking about your issue and then rate your thoughts on a scale of 1 to 10; make a note of how you now see the issue and feel about it.**

Has your thinking shifted? Which music was most powerful in terms of making you more resourceful?

Walking in someone else's shoes

Another way to develop your NLP skills is to find a positive role model — someone who seems to behave how you want to — and try on their body language for size. For example, you can copy how their posture and demeanor — upright or very

relaxed, smiling, or serious. You can imagine that you're wearing that person's shoes and try to walk as if you're treading in their footsteps.

By moving your body differently and adjusting your posture, gestures, and breathing, you automatically change your internal state — how you think and react.

If you're a small woman copying a large man or vice versa, this exercise can give you new insights into how your physical shape makes a difference to the way you influence people. Gill, one of our petite female clients, was struggling to get attention at face-to-face board meetings. By becoming more attuned to the physical mass of her male counterparts, she adapted her presenting style to be more expansive — moving purposefully across the room or presentation stage as she spoke. She also now spreads out her papers and takes up a larger portion of the boardroom meeting table. When meeting virtually, she ensures that she's seated on a high stool to loom larger on the screen. These minor tweaks are ways of marking out her territory and authority. Similarly, large men working with children often talk to children from a seated position closer to the floor, instead of towering above them — as you can spot clever politicians doing when visiting schools.

Becoming Sophisticated with Anchors

This section shows you how NLP anchoring techniques can help you face challenging and fearful situations. Perhaps you're battling with changing unhelpful behaviors such as smoking or eating the wrong foods; maybe you want to boost your confidence so that you can make a speech in public.

Of course, NLP isn't going to turn you into an opera singer or Olympic athlete overnight. NLP can't give you the competence to perform skills you don't possess, but anchoring techniques can help you to access your innate resources to be the very best you can.

Changing negative anchors

Sometimes you need a method for changing a negative anchor. As a simple example, you may want to change a destructive habit. A person who reaches for the cookie jar every time they have a cup of tea has created a negative anchor. Drink equals cookie. Or an office worker who feels anxious each day when going into work because they once had an argument with their boss may be heading for a stress-related illness.

Desensitizing yourself

One of the most common NLP approaches to releasing a negative anchor is *desensitizing*. To start, you need to get into a neutral or disassociated state (see Chapter 10 to find out more about dissociating) — and then you introduce the problem in small doses. So if the issue is wanting to lose weight, you need to first get into a strong state, when you're able to say "no, thank you" to fattening foods. Then you practice being tempted while staying in the strong state. Essentially, you need to develop new habits.

Collapsing the anchor

Another strategy is to *collapse the anchor* by firing off two anchors simultaneously — the unwanted negative one plus a positive one. You release the negative anchor while holding the positive one for another five seconds. The negative state is collapsed, making way for the positive one to remain.

ANECDOTE Nakyung was recently divorced and won custody of the couple's two young children. She felt uncontrollably angry every time her ex-husband called to arrange to visit the children. In turn, the children were becoming very anxious about weekend visits to their father and his new partner. Romilla worked with Nakyung to collapse the negative anchors and replace them with a series of positive ones so that she was able to manage a strong and open dialogue with her ex-husband whenever she had to be in his presence or hear his voice on the phone (unwanted negative anchors). In this way, Nakyung let go of the power he held.

Lengthening the anchor chain

You move through many different emotional states in a single day. Anchors often work well in chains, with one trigger leading to another. Sometimes, creating a chain of anchors can be useful. Each link in the chain acts as a stimulus to the next link, building up a sequence of states. For example, think of how an opera singer prepares for a major performance, as they pace through a sequence of states until they're mentally set, focused, and ready to go on stage.

You can design a chain of anchors as the route to get into a desired state when the shift from the current state to the desired positive state is too great a leap in one go.

For example, your current problem state may be anger and your desired state calm. This transition is quite a jump to achieve in one go. However, you can first step from anger to worry because of the overlap in these states. Your second step can then be from worry to curiosity because again similarities exist between the two states. The final step can be from curiosity to calm (see Figure 9-2). To move from step to step, you need to fire off a new anchor — as explained in the earlier section "Setting an anchor and building yourself a resourceful state" — until you reach your desired state.

FIGURE 9-2:
Transitioning
through a chain
of anchors.

Anger → Worry → Curiosity → Calm
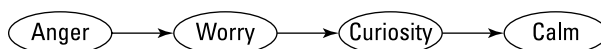
Curiosity and confusion are useful interim steps for achieving a change in state for yourself and others; they can often defuse emotionally charged situations.

ANECDOTE

When Kate worked on a consultancy project, one of the senior managers frequently interrupted highly charged meetings by stating, "I'm confused here. Would someone please just go over that again for me." As a strategy for defusing the situation and raising new ideas, it worked every time. One person saying that they were confused made everybody else slow down and question their own understanding.

Deploying stage anchors

For many people, public speaking represents the worst experience they can imagine. A number of studies, borne out by our own experiences of coaching clients, demonstrate that some people would actually rather die than stand up and speak in public! Apparently, public speaking is the number one fear for Americans; for the British, it's in second place behind spiders.

We regularly coach clients who suffer performance anxiety, which manifests itself in hot sweats, loss of voice, and stomach upsets. When guests are invited to give after-dinner speeches, they often fail to enjoy the meal because the prospect of entertaining the audience with their wit and wisdom over the coffee and dessert looms large.

If ever a reason existed to use anchoring to regain control, public speaking is it!

TIP

If you've had a particularly bad experience of public speaking, ask an NLP practitioner to perform a Fast Phobia Cure with you to desensitize the memory. (See Chapter 3 for an explanation of the NLP Fast Phobia Cure.)

Using the circle of excellence

The NLP *circle of excellence* is a technique to help you summon up the confidence to perform a skill. You can use it when you have a fear of public speaking or when you want to boost your confidence so that you can play your best shot in sport, as well as in many other instances. Kate has often taught it to clients who are called upon to address conference groups as well as make a speech at weddings and to deliver a calm eulogy at a funeral.

The circle of excellence is the classic NLP technique to practice with a partner when you're the focus of attention. It works best if you enlist a buddy or NLP practitioner who takes you sensitively through these steps while maintaining rapport with you and not rushing.

Think of the situation in which you have to perform and imagine a circle on the ground in front of you about one yard in diameter. Then follow these steps, which describe the step-by-step instructions that take you in and out of your circle, telling you what to do at each stage, with the help of a partner:

TRY THIS

1. **Stand outside the circle with your partner.**

   Identify your best state. Tell your partner what that state is in your own words. Your partner says, "Remember a time when you were [insert your exact words] . . . get back to it . . . see what you saw then, hear what you heard."

2. **Step inside the circle.**

   Relive that experience. Make it vivid; be there in it with all your senses. Feel what your hands are doing and hold or anchor that state with a hand movement at the point when the memory is most vivid.

3. **Step outside the circle, back to your partner.**

   Repeat the exercise with a second experience of your best state. To prepare for the future event, your partner says, "Think of a time when this state will be useful."

4. **Step inside the circle again.**

   With your hand in the anchored position, move into the circle; your partner asks you to see, hear, and feel how the experience can be for you now.

5. **Step outside the circle, back to your partner.**

   Relax . . . you've got it!

TIP

Repeat this exercise with more examples of your best state to strengthen the anchor even further. When you need to access your confident and positive state, you can imagine the circle slightly in front of you and take a small, discreet step forward into it.

Anchoring spatially

When you're giving a speech or presentation in front of an audience, *spatial anchoring* is a way of influencing your audience through anchors. When you repeatedly do the same thing in the same place on stage, people come to expect a certain behavior from you according to where you stand. A lectern is a definite anchor — when you stand at the lectern, people expect you to speak.

While presenting, you can deliberately set up other expectations with the audience at different places on the stage. Perhaps you deliver the main content from the center point of the stage but move to one side when you're telling stories and another side when you deliver technical information. You may have yet another space that you step to when being humorous or light-hearted. Very quickly, people come to expect a certain style input from you according to where you position yourself.

A Final Point about Anchors

Anchors may or may not work for you when you first try them. As with all the tools in this book, you learn fastest by taking an NLP class or working with an experienced practitioner. Whichever way you choose to develop your skills — on your own or with others — simply give it a go.

We encourage you to persist even if setting anchors seems strange at first. When you do take control of your own state, you expand your options and the result is certainly worthwhile. Being able to manage your emotional state is a source of great strength.

REMEMBER A fundamental NLP presupposition is that the person who demonstrates the most flexibility in a given situation is the one who succeeds. Anchors provide the means to flex your behavior at will.

IN THIS CHAPTER

» **Finding out how you can feel good and then even better**

» **Fine-tuning input from your senses**

» **Letting go of limiting beliefs and creating empowering ones**

» **Moving from an unwanted state to a desired state**

» **Taking the sting out of a painful experience**

Chapter **10**

Sliding the Controls of Your Experience

Try this experiment: Think of a really pleasant past experience. You don't have to share the details so you can let rip and really get into it. As you think of the experience, do you see a picture, sense a feeling, hear any sounds? Getting all three is great, and if you can only manage one or two out of the three, that's okay too; we work with you in this chapter to help you experience all three. Can you now begin to intensify the experience? Great! Now, can you ramp it up some more?

Welcome back! As you relived the experience, how did you intensify it? Did you make the picture brighter, bigger, more colorful, or closer to you? Maybe you turned up the volume of any sounds you heard, and if you had a feeling, you spread that sensation further through your body. You've just discovered how to play with your submodalities. *Submodalities* are the basic building blocks of the way you experience your world, and therefore a very slight change in a submodal–ity can have a significant effect on the changing of an experience. In other words, You can choose to change your mind to heighten a pleasurable time or to remove

the negative emotions from an unpleasant one. You can also take yourself from an undesired state, such as confused, to a better state, such as understanding. In short, you can choose the meaning you give to what happens to you in life. This chapter tells you how.

By practicing the exercises in this chapter, you become better at switching your submodalities; you discover just how easily you can change the way you think and experience the world around you. Practice can help you increase the choices in your life, whether that's to relieve stress, take the pain out of bad memories, or enhance the good times. When you set yourself a well-formed, desired outcome, for example, and pay attention to the submodalities, you make each goal more specific and clearly propel your future into motion. Have fun!

Recording Your Experiences with Your Submodalities

In NLP, your five senses — seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting — are called *modalities* (we describe in Chapter 5 how you experience your world through them). And the means by which you fine-tune your modalities to change their qualities are known as submodalities.

Examples of submodalities for your sense of sight may be the size of a picture, its brightness or color, and whether a frame surrounds it. Submodalities for hearing can be loudness, tempo, or the timbre of a voice, and for feeling a heaviness or butterflies in your stomach. You get the idea?

TECHNICAL STUFF

Contrastive analysis happens when you take two experiences and compare and contrast the submodalities of each. If, for example, when you compare the submodalities of something you know is real — say, a dog — with something you know is fantasy — a unicorn — you notice that each has differences in its submodalities.

Contrastive analysis is useful when you want to change the way you think about a person or an experience by changing related submodalities. For example, you may have difficulties dealing with someone with whom you're in contact on a regular basis. Changing how you see, hear, and feel when you think about that person will go a long way to changing how you react to them.

In a leadership coaching session, Rachel told Kate that the main reason she had left her old company was because her boss was a bully. Three months into her new job, Rachel discovered that her old boss was joining the new company in a senior role, and consequently, Rachel felt that her career chances were ruined. Using contrastive analysis, Kate worked with Rachel to explore the submodalities of her experiences with the negative boss and to compare them with those of a colleague with whom she enjoyed working. Rachel was then able to consider having a cordial working relationship with the old boss and defuse the strong negative feelings that came up for her whenever his name was mentioned. When her old boss joined her new company, Rachel dealt with him with greater confidence and was more assertive. She was surprised to discover that her new behavior resulted in her old boss being a little wary of her and treating her with more respect because she wasn't allowing herself to be bullied.

Grasping the Basic Info: What You Need to Know Before You Begin

Submodalities are how you give meaning to your experiences — whether something is real or false, good or bad, and so on. You can use submodalities to change the intensity of the meaning. In the exercise at the start of this chapter, you gave your experience a meaning — it was pleasant. By changing the submodalities of the experience, you were able to heighten the experience and therefore the meaning of the experience — and it became even more pleasant.

So now you know that you can control your memories simply by changing the submodalities of the pictures, sounds, and feelings. And just as you know that modalities can be broken down into submodalities, similarly you should be aware that the submodalities can have further distinctions. For example, a picture can be in color and encompass different shades, or it can be in black and white and contain variations of gray. It can have a frame around it or be panoramic. Not clear about panoramic? Imagine standing on the top of a mountain and looking at the scenery in front of you as you turn your head, slowly, through 180 degrees. What you see is in panorama. In addition, being associated with or dissociated from a picture can have an effect on your emotions (see the following section for details). For example, sounds can be in your head or to the side, and feelings can take on a texture.

Because you can change each of your submodalities, we provide you with a list in the online Cheat Sheet, which you can find by searching for **Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies Cheat Sheet** at `https://www.dummies.com`. We recommend that you fill out the form before you begin to make changes so that you can always revert to the original structure of a submodality if your change raises any anxieties.

Associating or dissociating

This section helps you to understand how you can move in and out of your memories so as to create more options for how you heighten or reduce the intensity of your feelings. In our experience, this aspect is a very important submodality and one that needs a little extra clarification.

When you visualize yourself in a picture, the experience is like watching yourself in a homemade film, and we call this experience being *dissociated*. If, however, you're in the picture, seeing out of your own eyes, you're *associated*. Being associated or dissociated into a picture can be an extremely important submodality when experiencing emotions as a result of the pictures you make.

Usually the emotions are heightened if you associate into the picture. Sometimes, people find associating or dissociating difficult. For instance, someone who has experienced a severe personal loss or been traumatized may find it difficult to associate as a general rule. Unless they overcome the trauma of the loss, they need to practice associating consciously until it becomes easier to do. Sometimes people can be so associated whenever they remember an experience that they can't move on from it. For example, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs when people continually relive a traumatic experience as if it is happening at that moment.

To create the feeling of being associated or dissociated, create a picture of yourself sitting in the front seat of a car. When you're dissociated, you perhaps see a picture of yourself in the car, a little bit like watching yourself on television or looking at yourself in a photograph. If you want to associate into the picture, imagine opening the car door and sitting down. Now look out of your own eyes. The dashboard is in front of you. Can you see the texture and color of the dashboard? Now look up at the windshield. Is it splattered with the remnants of suicidal insects (or aliens, if you've seen the film *Men in Black*)?

After visualization, some people find that dissociating is difficult. To do so, imagine stepping out of the car and onto the pavement. Turn around and look back at the car and see yourself sitting in the front seat. If you still can't dissociate, pretend that you're watching a film and you're up there on the screen, in front of the car.

If you feel that you aren't getting the hang of this exercise (or any others), feel free to leave it for the moment. You can always come back to it and give it another go when you have more NLP experience embedded in your mind and muscle. Or you can find yourself an NLP coach or NLP practice group to work with to advance your skills.

Defining the details of your memories

While you're reading this book, you're probably unaware of the feel of the seat against your back and legs, although you are now because we mention it. Similarly, you're not always aware of the qualities of your memories until we ask you to remember a time when you were, for example, brushing your teeth, playing a game, reading a book, or cooking. Then you realize that a range of qualities applies to those memories. For instance, when remembering reading a book, the picture you make of yourself, the book or the story, may be surrounded by a frame, or it may be in black and white. Perhaps you can hear the sound of distant traffic or of the pages turning, if you're holding a printed edition. Maybe the book you were reading made you laugh and feel uplifted and happy.

You can become aware of the qualities of your submodalities by paying attention to what you see, hear, or feel when you recall an experience. The following sections present you with questions that can help you elicit the quality of the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (touch) submodalities.

If we ask you to remember an important life lesson, your survival wiring means you're more likely to recall a negative or stressful experience — one that carries stronger visual, auditory, and kinesthetic details than memories that aren't as emotionally charged. The same is also true for deeply joyful or uplifting experiences. In both cases, the enhanced sensory detail makes the memory more vivid and enduring.

We focus on just the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic submodalities in this chapter and put taste and smell aside for now. We do so because we believe that — unless you're a wine-, tea-, or coffee-taster — these senses don't have the same power as sight, sound, and touch. Having said that, tastes and smells certainly affect your emotional brain, and you may find the smell of roasted chestnuts suddenly transporting you back to a childhood memory of falling snow and Christmas carols.

Eliciting visual submodalities

You can define the quality of a picture in terms of where it's located in space as you look at it. For instance, the image may be directly in front of you, to your left, to your right, or slightly displaced to the top or bottom. If the picture is

panoramic, it looks like you're standing in one spot and turning your head to look at the view in front of you. The picture has other qualities too, such as brightness, shape, and so on. You can discover how you make pictures in your head by thinking about the following qualities:

Visual Submodalities	Questions to Discover Them
Location	Where is it in space?
Color or black and white	Can you point to the picture? How close or how far away is it? Is it in color or black and white?
Associated or dissociated	Is the picture associated or dissociated?
	Can you see yourself in the picture or are you looking out of your own eyes?
Size	Is the picture big or small?
Two- or three-dimensional	Is the picture in two or three dimensions?
Brightness	Is the picture bright or dull?
Still or moving	Is the picture still or is it a film?
	If the picture is a film, how fast is it running?
Shape	Is the picture square, round, or rectangular?
Framed or panoramic	Does the picture have a border around it or is it panoramic?
Focused or fuzzy	Is the picture in sharp focus or is it blurred?

Eliciting auditory submodalities

Like the pictures you make in your head, the sounds you hear have certain qualities to them. You may not be aware of the attributes of the sounds you hear until you focus your mind on them by considering the following questions:

Auditory Submodalities	Questions to Discover Them
Location	Where do you hear the sound?
	Is the sound inside your head or outside?
	Can you point to where the sound is coming from?
Words or sounds	Can you hear words or sounds?
	If words, is it the voice of someone you know?
Volume	Is the sound loud or soft?
	Is the sound a whisper or clearly audible?

Auditory Submodalities	Questions to Discover Them
Tone	If you hear a voice, what tone does it have?
	Is it deep, rich, nasal, rasping?
Pitch	Is the sound high or low pitched?
Mono or stereo	Can you hear the sound on both sides or is it one-sided?
	Is the sound all around you?
Constant or intermittent	Is the sound continuous or intermittent?
Rhythm	Does the sound have a beat or a rhythm to it?
Tempo	Is the sound you hear slow or fast?
Tune	Does the sound have a tune?

Eliciting kinesthetic submodalities

Guess what! Submodalities to do with feelings also have qualities that help to define them:

Kinesthetic Submodalities	Questions to Discover Them
Location	Where is it in your body?
	Can you point to where you can feel the feeling?
Shape	Does the feeling have a shape?
Pressure	Does the feeling exert a pressure?
Size	Does the feeling have a size?
	Is it big or small?
Quality	Does the feeling make you tingle?
	Is it spread out or knotted in one place?
Intensity	Is the feeling strong or weak?
Still or moving	Can you feel the feeling in one place or is it moving around your body?
Temperature	Is the feeling warm or cold?
Constant or intermittent	Is the feeling constant or intermittent?
Texture	Does the feeling have a texture to it?
Picture	Can you make a picture of the feeling?

Koa was prone to feeling very anxious before his weekly meetings with his manager. Consequently, he felt unable to make his case when his manager raised certain issues with him. Over a period of six months, Koa became increasingly anxious about going to work, and by the time he consulted Romilla, he was in a state of despair.

When questioned, Koa said that the feeling of anxiety looked like a heavy, metallic, black cube just below his sternum. Romilla asked Koa to change the color gradually from metallic black to gray to silver. The cube grew steadily lighter in both shade and weight until it transformed into a harmless spiral that Koa could imagine lifting out of his body and letting it float away. Koa has gone on to use this process for dispelling other unhelpful feelings in different situations.

When you're playing at changing the submodalities of a memory, you need to make a list before you start doing so. If you become uncomfortable with the process at any point, you can then return the pictures, sounds, or feelings to their original conceptions. You can go to the Cheat Sheet for this book at `www.dummies.com` to print a "Submodalities Worksheet" designed for this very purpose. Please feel free to make as many copies as you need.

Always ask yourself whether going ahead with any change to a submodality is okay. If you discover any resistance — a feeling that makes you uncomfortable — acknowledge the feeling and thank your unconscious mind for making you aware of possible internal conflict. You can overcome this issue gradually, through some quiet time to yourself, or you may find that working with an NLP coach is beneficial.

When Romilla was working on resolving grief with Andreas, she found that he didn't want to let go of the pain of loss. He believed that if he did so, he'd forget his father. However, when Andreas thought about his father, he experienced a deep sense of sadness accompanied by memories of his father's illness. In fact, by releasing the pain, he was able to remember his father even more vividly as the vibrant, loving man he'd been before he became ill. Even more importantly, Andreas was able to access happier memories of his father and to allow his recall of these times to expand while minimizing those focused on his father's last years.

Getting a little practice

Imagine you have a remote control with three sliding buttons labeled V for visual, A for auditory, and K for kinesthetic. You can change the qualities of any pictures you make in your mind, sounds you hear in your head, or feelings you experience in your body just by sliding the V, A, and K controls. (For more information on VAK modalities, head to Chapter 5.)

Why would you want to adjust the qualities of your memories? Supposing, years ago, you were rehearsing for a school play and your highly stressed teacher screamed at you, "You stupid child, you blew it again!" Now you have to give presentations at work, and every time you get started, you begin to sweat and stammer and the voice in your head says, "You stupid child, you blew it again!" You may need to adjust the qualities of your memories because they get in the way of what you want to achieve. Imagine you slide the brightness control and the picture of the teacher gets dimmer. Then you slide the size control and the teacher gets smaller and becomes insignificant. Finally, you adjust the volume control and the scream drops to a whisper. Now you find that you can make presentations the way you always wanted.

TRY THIS

To see how effective changing submodalities can be, try this exercise, using the worksheet in the later section "Submodalities Worksheet":

1. **Think of someone you like.**

2. **Remember the last time you spent real, quality time with that person.**

3. **Record the qualities of the picture you see, sounds you hear, and feelings you get.**

4. **Change the picture you made, one *visual* submodality at a time; notice how each change affects the memory of your time together.**

5. **Change the sounds you hear, one *auditory* submodality at a time; notice how each change affects the memory.**

6. **Change any feelings that you're experiencing, one kinesthetic submodality at a time; notice how each change impacts the whole experience of your time together.**

Understanding Your Critical Submodalities

Some submodalities are very powerful in determining a person's response, such as the size or brightness of a mental picture. You may find that by making a picture bigger or brighter, the experience is heightened. Or you may find that moving the picture to a different location or associating or dissociating into a picture (as we discuss in the earlier section "Associating or dissociating") can affect the sounds and feelings of an experience.

A *critical* submodality is one that, when changed, alters other submodalities of an experience and also affects the submodalities of other senses. The result is that, by changing the brightness of a picture, for example, not only do other qualities of the picture change automatically, but changes also happen to sounds and feelings experienced in conjunction with the picture, without conscious intervention.

Romilla was coaching a client, Suzy, who was having trouble with a goal she wanted to achieve and had been struggling to reach for almost six months. When Suzy explored the submodalities of her goal, she said it was over and up to the left (if you imagine a giant clock in front of you, it was at the number 11 and almost at roof height). When asked, Suzy moved the location of the image so that it was right in front of her and about one yard away.

Suzy's reaction was phenomenal. She jumped in her chair so hard she almost fell off it, and then she turned bright pink and couldn't stop laughing. Changing the location of the picture had a real impact on Suzy and brought the goal to life for her: She felt what achieving the goal would be like and the move made it much more immediate. Using some more goal-setting techniques, a delighted Suzy achieved her goal in four months. Go to Chapter 4 to learn more about goals.

When you work with an NLP-trained coach on an outcome using submodalities, you can do so "content-free." That is, you don't need to tell the coach the personal details of what you're working with, just the submodalities you're experiencing. This approach can be useful for very private issues.

You experience your world through your five senses: visual (eyes), auditory (ears), kinesthetic (feelings and touch), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). More than likely, you use one sense in preference to the others to collect data about your world, particularly at times of stress. This sense is called your *lead* or *primary representational system*; it influences how you learn and the way you represent your external world inside your head.

During a coaching session, Charles discovered that his primary representational system was auditory. Also, he was more kinesthetic than visual and felt emotions quite strongly. Charles was working to change a nagging voice that he was allowing to undermine his confidence when he was starting something new, and which kept him awake at night with its chatter. On examining the qualities of the voice, he found that it was, in fact, his mother talking to him and that he heard her voice inside his head. Unfortunately, she had had a rather negative way of putting things. Whenever Charles heard this voice, he felt sick and a sensation like a black, shiny rock was stuck in the region of his solar plexus.

When Charles changed the voice to a whisper and moved it to just below his left ear, outside his head, he realized he didn't feel sick, and he felt a warm glow in his

stomach. Charles wasn't prepared to change the voice further, however, because he believed the voice served to watch out for potential problems. He just needed to change its quality so that it allowed him to get on with his life.

Making Real-Life Changes

As you experiment with the exercises in this chapter, we hope that you begin to get a pretty good idea of your *critical* submodality: the submodality that can impact on and change other submodalities. And we hope that you gain the conviction that you're in control of your experiences and can change them in order to choose how you feel. In the light of this knowledge and belief, experience real change in your life by working through the exercises in the following sections.

REMEMBER

Just think: You can sit and program your mind on the train, in a traffic jam or even over a boring meal with your in-laws (or should that be out-laws, just kidding!). And remember, practice makes perfect, so start experimenting, safe in the knowledge that you can't get arrested for playing with your submodalities, even in public.

Removing the pain from an experience

TRY THIS

Can you recall an unpleasant experience? We don't mean something life-shattering, just an incident that, when you think of it, makes you feel less than good. Got one?

Now, using the "Submodalities Worksheet" in the book's Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com` examine and note the submodalities of the experience. With this knowledge, start changing the picture, sounds, and feelings that you experience when you think of this unpleasant incident. What happened? You do feel better now, don't you? No? Then discover what happens when you change the submodalities of the unpleasant experience to those of the pleasant experience we asked you to recall at the beginning of this chapter.

Changing a limiting belief

How often have you heard yourself say things such as, "I can't do that," "I'm no good at math," or "I should learn to cook properly"? These statements are all examples of *limiting beliefs*, generalizations that you make about yourself and your world. Your beliefs can disable you, holding you back, or they can empower you. Beliefs can all too easily become self-fulfilling prophecies, which start off just as a notion or a hint of an idea. Then your filters (meta programs, values, beliefs,

attitudes, memories, and decisions — which we discuss in Chapter 8) begin aligning themselves like gates to let in only those facts and experiences that reinforce your beliefs.

For instance, imagine that you decide that you're a little more cuddly than you want to be and so you start a diet. Perhaps you stick to the diet for a few days, but then temptation gets the better of you. At this stage, you receive a hint of the notion that "Maybe I'm not good at following a diet." Then you try again and submit to temptation again, until eventually you come to the limiting belief that "I can't stick to a diet."

TRY THIS

1. **Think of a limiting belief you currently hold, one that you'd like to change.**

   Perhaps you believe that you have two left feet when dancing or that you're not ever going to get to grips with digital media.

2. **Think of a belief that you used to hold but which, for you, is no longer true.**

   This belief can be something such as believing in the tooth fairy. Use the "Submodalities Worksheet" in the book's Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com` and note the submodalities of your old belief.

3. **Think of something that you believe to be certain.**

   If you can't think of one, try the belief that "the sun is going to rise tomorrow."

   Again, using the submodalities form, note the submodalities of this belief.

4. **Think of a belief that you'd rather have.**

   This belief can be the opposite of your limiting belief in step 1 but restated in the positive: "I'm a good dancer." Perhaps you want to be better at parking — "I'm good at parking" or want to feel more confident when speaking professionally — "I'm a confident professional speaker."

   With the help of the "Submodalities Worksheet," in the book's Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com`, notice the submodalities of the belief you'd rather have.

5. **Change the submodalities of your limiting belief (step 1) to those of the belief that for you is no longer true (step 2).**

6. **Change the submodalities of the belief you'd rather have (step 4) to those of the belief of which you're certain (step 3).**

Notice how your negative belief has changed, if it hasn't disappeared altogether!

Creating an empowering belief

To avoid your beliefs turning into self-fulfilling prophecies, remember that you have control over choosing which beliefs you want to retain. In the preceding section, you discover how to let go of a limiting belief. Just imagine the usefulness of finding out how to increase your options in life by choosing to create a whole plethora of beliefs that enable you to live your life more authentically.

1. Think of a belief that would be really useful to have: We call it a desired belief.

For example, "I deserve to be successful."

2. Think of a belief that for you is absolutely true.

For example, the sun is going to rise in the morning (yes, even behind those clouds).

3. Using the "Submodalities Worksheet" in the book's Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com`, identify the submodalities of this absolutely true belief.

For example, when you think of the sun rising, you may see it in front of you, about two yards away, in pale, shimmering, orange colors, and very bright. You may feel warm all over and hear birds singing.

4. Put the desired belief into exactly the same submodalities as the absolutely true belief.

Move the picture you get when you think of your desired belief to the same position and distance as the rising sun and give it the same colors and brightness. Then produce the same feelings of warmth and listen for the birdsong.

Getting rid of that backache

This process can be used for other symptoms such as headaches brought on by too much stress or muscles that are stiff from maintaining the same position for too long.

This process is great for alleviating discomfort quickly, without needing to wait for a doctor's appointment or resorting to medication. However, if your symptoms persist or for peace of mind, do consult your physician.

1. Calibrate your backache on a scale of 1 to 5.

2. Make a picture of the backache.

3. From the "Submodalities Worksheet" in the book's Cheat Sheet at `www.dummies.com`, note the submodalities of the backache.

4. **Change each attribute of the backache, one at a time.**

   If the pain has a color, what happens when you give it a different color, such as healing blue? What happens if you see that band of steel break up into strips of ribbon, fluttering in the wind? If the pain is a dull ache, can you change the feeling to a tingle? If it feels hot, can you change that feeling into a cool breeze blowing over the area? These changes can reduce your backache, if it hasn't already gone.

5. **Now imagine that you're sitting in front of a cinema screen: Remove the backache from your body and project a picture of the backache on to the screen.**

6. **Make the picture on the screen smaller and smaller until it becomes the size of a balloon.**

7. **Now watch the balloon float up into the sky, and as you see it floating away, so your backache becomes less and less painful.**

8. **As the balloon reaches the clouds, calibrate your backache to just a 1.**

9. **As the balloon disappears from sight, the backache fades to just the faintest memory.**

Using the swish

The swish is a powerful NLP technique that helps create lasting change in unhelpful patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It's designed to shift any spontaneous, undesirable response, whether that's a visible behavior or an internal reaction, like negative self-talk or feeling anxious, that's triggered by a specific cue.

By interrupting the old loop and linking the trigger to a more empowering response, the swish helps rewire your strategy at its root. Each time the trigger is activated, you default to a new, more effective way of responding.

Say that you bite your nails. The swish enables you to use a picture of the trigger — such as seeing you run a finger along a nail and finding a jagged edge or a response to getting nervous that creates the unwanted behavior (biting your nails) — to create a new, desired pattern of behavior or new image (your hands looking immaculate).

You can use the swish pattern to change that feeling of exhaustion after a day's work into one of being relaxed and ready to enjoy your evening.

1. **Identify the unwanted behavior.**

   You may want to stop biting your nails, smoking, or getting angry at small transgressions.

2. **Check with yourself that going ahead with the change is okay.**

   Simply ask yourself, "Is it okay for me to change in this context?"

3. **Identify the trigger that initiates the unwanted behavior and make an associated picture (check out the "Associating or dissociating" section earlier in this chapter). This image is the cue picture.**

   You may see yourself running your finger along a nail or in a situation that makes you nervous or angry.

4. **Play with the image to discover a critical submodality.**

   As you become more experienced, you'll be able to change one or two critical submodalities, but for now start off with one. You change the submodalities of the image to make the cue picture more compelling.

5. **Break state.**

   Break state means to change the state or frame of mind that you're in. You can stand up and give your body a good shake or move around the room when going from one phase of an exercise to another, allowing a natural break from the pictures and emotions of the first stage of the exercise.

6. **Think of the desired image. Create a dissociated image of you doing a preferred behavior or looking a certain way.**

7. **Break state.**

8. **Recall the cue picture. Make sure that you're associated into it and place a frame around it.**

9. **Create an image of the desired outcome.**

10. **Squash the desired image into a very small, dark dot and place it in the bottom-left corner of the cue picture.**

11. **With a *swishhhh* sound, propel the small, dark dot into the big picture so that it explodes, covering the cue picture.**

12. **Break state.**

13. **Repeat the process several times speedily.**

If you display more kinesthetic tendencies than visual or auditory, you may find the swish more effective when you keep your hands far apart at the start of this exercise. Then, as you *swishhhh*, bring your hands together quickly.

Chapter **11**

Working with the Logical Levels

I n this chapter, we introduce you to a favorite model in NLP, one that shows you how to make sense of your experience, work out the most flexible approach, and achieve the NLP ideal of understanding the outcome that you want. NLP developer and trainer Robert Dilts developed this model — known as the *logical levels* — and it's become extremely popular in NLP work.

This model is particularly helpful in several ways:

» Understanding what makes you tick as an individual

» Analyzing how other people and organizations function

» Seeing how to break an experience into manageable parts

» Working with your current reality and making adjustments confidently

The logical levels model can help you navigate a route forward during confusing times by identifying any areas of your life that feel disjointed. Using the model may set you on a new career path or help you find the motivation to become super healthy!

Understanding Logical Levels

NLP logical levels allow you to think about any experience or situation in its component parts (check out Figure 11-1). (You may also see logical levels referred to in the NLP literature as *a series of neurological levels*.)
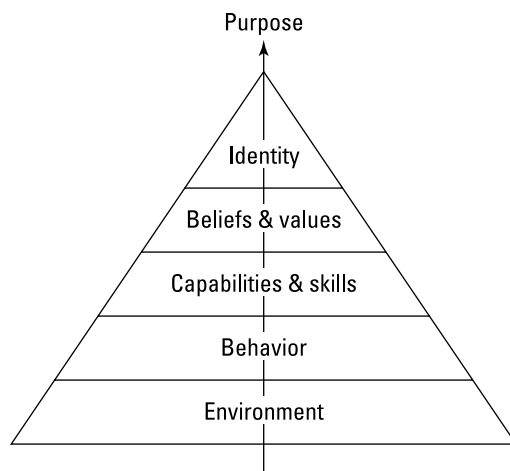
FIGURE 11-1: The logical levels of experience.

Although we present the levels to you in Figure 11-1 as a hierarchy, looking at them as a network of interrelationships or a series of concentric circles is also helpful because all the levels relate to each other. The visual of the model simply creates some structure to help you understand how it works. In our coaching workshops, we bring out sets of individual cards with key questions on them to inspire exploration from one level to the next. Often we encourage people to stand on large cards on the floor to help them really get in touch with their feelings as they experience each level. We also use small business-card-sized versions for discussions in a public place such as a coffee shop.

In many instances, gathering information at the lower levels on the diagram is easier than doing so at the higher levels. So, for example, a company would find doing an audit of the buildings (*environment*) easier than measuring whether the values of the organization are being realized by the leaders and employees (*beliefs and values*) or assessing its image in the marketplace (*identity*). Each level impacts those above and below it; the key value of the model is that it provides a disciplined way to unpack the structure of your experience, which is the essence of NLP.

Recognizing that your emotional investment increases the farther up the levels you go is useful. Thinking that someone is criticizing your environment, behavior, or lack of skills may not have a big impact on you, unless any of these are linked

to your identity or a value or belief. After all, you can always move, learn new skills, or adapt your behavior. However, if you think someone disagrees with a deeply held belief or value or is being disparaging of who you are, you're likely to have a much stronger emotional response. Values, beliefs, and your sense of identity are so ingrained that they're usually outside of your conscious awareness. The result? Your limbic or emotional brain reacts to perceived threats, such as disagreements or criticism, before your rational cerebral cortex can temper your response. You feel the discomfort before you've identified the reason rationally.

Survival is a basic human instinct. Our ancestors understood that their survival was dependent on being part of a tribe. Isolation usually meant death through starvation or meeting a predator. Identity, values, and beliefs give you a greater sense of belonging and, therefore, security, especially as they lie at the unconscious level of your awareness.

TECHNICAL STUFF

The French have an expression to describe the feeling you have when you're comfortable in yourself and everything is running smoothly: *elle va bien dans sa peau* (literally translated as "she goes well in her own skin"). Similarly, NLPers use the word *congruence* to describe precisely how you are when you're truly being yourself. The term means that you're on track and consistent. The logical levels of environment, behavior, capability, beliefs and values, identity, and purpose are all lined up. Look out for this *alignment* in organizations as well as people. When companies or individuals are going through periods of change, some misalignment is likely to exist. People may behave *incongruently* in unpredictable ways that aren't a true reflection of what they really believe is right or fits with their true identity. It's a warning that something is not quite right.

Asking the right questions

As you begin to gather information about a person or situation, consider asking questions that apply at these different levels, beginning from the base of the pyramid illustrated in Figure 11-1:

» **Environment** refers to the factors that are external opportunities or constraints: answers the questions *where*, *when*, and *with whom*.

» **Behavior** is made up of specific actions or reactions within the environment: answers the question *what*.

» **Capabilities and skills** are about the knowledge and skills, the how-tos that guide and give direction to behavior: answers the question *how*.

» **Beliefs and values** provide the reinforcement (motivation and permission) to support or deny your capabilities: answers the question *why*.

WHY IS "WHY?" THE HARDEST QUESTION?

In her early career as a business writer, Kate spent many happy years of corporate life interviewing chief executives and leadership teams, interpreting their vision and publishing their words of wisdom in an easily digestible format for employees to understand.

The "who, what, when, where, why, and how" questions form the essential journalist's repertoire. Yet, only when coming across logical levels in NLP did Kate realize just why some questions meet blank stares, even hostility, while others receive a warm welcome.

When you want to know something about a subject, it's easier to work up the logical levels. Start with gathering information that relates to the environment — the where, when, and with whom. These questions are factual and so require less effort to answer. Then move through the what and the how. Leave the why question until last. Answering "Why did you do that?" — which rushes headlong into the realm of beliefs — is harder than answering "How did you do that?" — a much gentler approach — or even "How did that happen?" which disassociates the person from the question. Each question taps into a different part of the brain: the factual questions feed into the neocortex, whereas the why questions get deeper into the subtleties of the limbic brain.

>> **Identity** factors determine your sense of self: answers the question *who*.

>> **Purpose** goes beyond self-consciousness to relate to the bigger picture about your mission: answers the questions *what for* or *for whom*.

Taking logical levels step-by-step

The logical levels enable you to think about what's happening in the world around you. These stepping stones help you to understand the structure and pattern as well as the content of different issues, events, relationships, or organizations, as we explain in this section and the next.

We now look at how you can apply this model when you're facing a dilemma that needs a solution. Imagine that you're in a relationship that isn't working. You can use the concept of logical levels to help you find the best way forward. Here's how the process works:

1. **Recognize that things are out of alignment.**

   You know this situation is the case when you're uncomfortable with your partner and you know that you want things to be different.

2. **Discover what can be different.**

Ask yourself certain questions that can help you pinpoint exactly what you want to be different. For example, if you both simply moved to a new flat or different city would things improve? (environment) Does one set of in-laws make too many demands on your time and stop you from developing your relationship as a couple? (behavior) Or do you want fundamentally different things in your lives? (values) Each logical level has certain types of questions. (Head to the later section Finding the Right Lever for Change: to help you work through the individual logical levels.)

3. **When you've identified the logical level, take action to bring that level back in alignment with the others.**

At the lower levels, say at environment or behavior, you may both be able to make simple shifts in order to have a harmonious relationship. You may ask your partner to be tidier at home, for example, while you share the administration of bill paying. Building your skills in an area such as talking freely about your feelings or learning DIY may take more time and effort. Also, working with an individual coach can be valuable, to help you examine your beliefs and values or develop a stronger identity for yourself.

TIP

Try this process with any relationship you'd like to improve such as that with a work colleague, supplier, friend, or committee/community contact.

ANECDOTE

Estella was shocked when her husband of ten years announced that he was leaving home and moving in with one of her good friends. She felt that if they were to move house (change the environment level) and spend more time together on date nights (the behavior level) all would be well. Through some relationship coaching, she came to realize that her husband had always held completely different values (the beliefs and values level) to her. He came from a large, boisterous family envi–ronment and wanted to recreate that atmosphere at home. Estella was brought up as the only child of serious parents and focused all her attention on her work. She never wanted to be a mother or homemaker (the identity level) and felt her sense of purpose was achieved through her work in corporate litigation. In the end, they decided to divorce and amicably go their separate ways because they each wanted a fundamentally different relationship.

REMEMBER

Often people attempt to solve issues by changing one logical level — such as environment or behavior — when they need to address another logical level, such as that of values or identity. As coaches, we meet clients whose initial aim is to find a better job, home, or relationship, yet they regularly encounter similar problems in the new situation to the one that they've left behind. When we help them to identify the "pattern" that they're following, they can make better choices for the future.

Employing practical uses for logical levels

You can use logical levels to bring energy and focus to many different situations. Here are just a few examples:

>> **Gathering and structuring information:** Compiling a report, writing an essay for school, conducting interviews, or structuring any piece of communication.

>> **Carrying out a modeling exercise:** The logical levels offer a practical framework from which to start (turn to Chapter 19 for more on modeling).

>> **Making a career choice:** Exploring all aspects of a career move: ascertaining the best environment, ensuring it matches your values, or identifying how this job connects with your passion and purpose in life.

>> **Building relationships in a family:** Exploring what all members of the family want in order for the family to work together. This approach is especially useful when dramatic change occurs in a family's structure, such as divorce or remarriage.

>> **Improving individual or corporate performance:** Deciding where to make business changes that help turn around a struggling company or one going through mergers and acquisitions. Coming up with a development plan for an individual employee.

>> **Developing leadership and confidence:** Stepping through the levels to gain alignment and thus feel confident in leading a team or enterprise.

REMEMBER

Open any toolbox — whether it's a box of colored flipchart pens, a palette of paints, electric drill bits, or a mechanic's spanners — and some favorites always take center stage. You keep coming back to these faithful friends and can depend on them for the feel-good factor. You'll discover that the logical levels model provides a value-added feature time and time again. The model is ever-present, like a friend helping to decipher complex information, whether you need to make sense of a business project or unravel a difficult conversation. If you keep returning to any single, well-loved tool in the NLP toolkit, the logical levels model may well be the one for you.

Finding the Right Lever for Change

Carl Jung, one of the twentieth century's leading thinkers in psychology, famously said, "We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate; it oppresses." And he was right, because the first step to coping with change

is to accept that it's happening. You're then in a position to work proactively with the change and give yourself options, instead of waiting to be on the receiving end of whatever happens to you.

Three requirements need to be in place for change to happen. You must:

>> Want to change

>> Know or find out how to change

>> Take action to change

In the following sections, we delve further into the logical levels. As you explore, keep in mind one important question: "How can you make change easy for yourself?" (Chapter 20 offers further useful insights into change.)

We apply all the questions we raise in the following sections to you as an individual, but you can ask the same questions to assess what's happening in an organization as well.

Environment

The environment level is about place and people — the physical context in which you hang out — and about finding the right time. If you want to become fluent in a new language, the most effective way to learn is to go and live in the relevant country for a while, fully immersing yourself in the culture, ideally by living with native speakers. Similarly, if you want to get to grips with a new app or piece of technology, moving on to a project to work with a person or team that applies it in their business makes sense. Again, the new environment is conducive to learning, which is itself a type of change. The timing is also critical — you can't learn if the time isn't right for you — for example, if you're tied up responding to other needs.

Here are some environment questions to ask yourself when you sense that you're not in the right place or now isn't the right time for you to get what you want:

>> Where do you work best?

>> Where in the world do you want to be?

>> What kind of home environment is right for you — modern, minimalist, or traditional? What feels like a good fit?

>> What kind of people do you like to have around you? Who makes you feel good, energized, and comfortable? Who makes you feel drained?

>> When do you prefer to be alone, and when with others?

>> What time of day do you feel good — are you up at the crack of dawn or a night owl?

Questions such as these give you the right kind of data to decide what environment issues you can work on.

Behavior

Behavior refers to what you think as well as what you say and do — what you consciously get up to. NLP points out that all your behavior is aimed at a purpose and has a positive intention for you. (Even the bad habits!)

Change at the behavioral level is easier to make when you have a real sense of purpose that fits with your sense of identity, beliefs, and values.

Ask yourself the following behavior questions when you think that you may need to change your behaviors to get the results you want:

>> Do your behaviors support your goals?

>> Do they fit with your sense of who you are?

>> Do you act in line with your values?

>> What do you find yourself thinking/saying/doing habitually? Can you detect any patterns?

>> What is the impact of other people's words on you?

>> How aware are you of people's behavior — for example, how they walk, the tone of their voice, and their smile? What color changes do you observe in people as they talk?

>> How does your breathing change, and when?

>> What body language do you adopt in different circumstances?

>> Does the sound of your voice fit consistently with what you're saying?

Maximizing effective behaviors

To create positive change, developing the behaviors and habits that serve you well is a good idea. Often, small changes have an incremental effect. If you're working on losing weight to fit into a new outfit, eating a healthy salad each day in place of a sandwich is a valuable habit to cultivate. In the same way, if you're trying to

improve your meetings at work, establishing clear guidelines regarding use of mobile phones and punctuality would be good behavior on the part of a team.

When Manuela wanted to drop a dress size for her daughter's wedding, she realized that she had to take her dieting seriously. She worked with a nutritionist who taught her about adapting her diet and gave her a sheet on which to record everything she ate, the supplements she took, and her exercise regime. She also gave Manuela a notebook in which to jot down everything that had gone well in her day and introduced her to a motivational fitness trainer. This daily regime kept Manuela on track to regain her slim figure and have wedding photos that she's delighted to look at.

Practicing the right behaviors until they become habitual increases your capability. How many great sports people or musicians are born wielding a tennis racket or violin? Tennis star Andy Murray is renowned for the dedication he puts into his gym work as well as the number of tennis balls he hits in preparation for tournaments. Olympic-medal-winning rowers can be seen out on the cold river at 5 a.m. when the rest of us are still tucked up in bed. Top violinists begin by squeaking out the notes as they practice for hundreds of hours (often to the despair of their families!). Constant hard practice keeps top performers ahead in their games.

Modifying unwanted behaviors

What about the unwanted behaviors, the things you do and those you'd prefer not to do, silly habits such as smoking or eating unhealthily? They become hard to change because they're linked to other, higher, logical levels involving beliefs or identity:

"I'm a smoker" = a statement about identity.

"I need to have a cigarette when I get stressed" = a statement about belief.

"He's a big, strong lad" = a statement about identity.

"He can't live on salad and fruit" = a statement about belief.

To make change easier, create a new identity for yourself such as "I'm a healthy person" and adopt beliefs such as "I can develop the right habits to look after myself." Chapter 3 covers how to get to grips with the power of your beliefs.

Capabilities and skills

Capabilities are talents and skills that lie within people and organizations as valuable assets. These behaviors may be the ones that you do so well that you can do them consistently without any seemingly conscious effort. Like walking and

talking, you learned these skills without ever understanding how you did so. From birth, humans are naturally wonderful learning machines, and advances in neuroscience teach us of the capacity of the human brain to change, proving that, contrary to popular belief, you can indeed teach an old dog new tricks.

Other capabilities you learn more consciously. Perhaps you can fly a kite, ride a bicycle, wire an electrical circuit, write a blog, or run a business. You have deliberately acquired these skills. Or maybe you're great at seeing the funny side of life, listening to friends, or getting the kids to school on time. All these capabilities are valuable skills that you take for granted and other people can learn. You're likely to remember the time before you were able to do these things, whereas you probably can't recall a time before you could walk or talk. These individual capabilities also benefit you in employment, because organizations build core competencies into their job specifications, defining essential skills that people need for the company to function at its best.

NLP focuses plenty of attention on the capability level, working on the premise that all skills are learnable. NLP assumes that anything is possible if taken in bite-sized pieces or chunks. The HR director of one of the UK's most prestigious retailers told us that "We recruit primarily on attitude: Once this is right, we can teach people the skills they need to do the job." Even attitudes can be acquired and changed so long as you find the desire, know-how, and opportunity to learn.

A valuable question to consider is "How can I do that?" Hold this question in mind as you go through every day. The NLP approach is that, by modeling others and yourself, you become open to making changes and developing your own capabilities. If you want to do something well, find someone else who can do it and pay close attention to all that person's logical levels. You can find more about modeling in Chapter 19.

Here are some capability and skills questions and ideas to consider when you want to assess your capabilities and see where you can learn and improve:

» What skills have you learned that you're proud of — how did you acquire them?

» Have you become expert at something that serves you less well? If so, how did that happen? What skill may be better in its place?

» Do you know someone who has a really positive attitude or skill that you want for yourself — how can you learn from that person?

» What may you hear if you ask others to say what they think you're good at?

» What next? What would you like to learn?

As you build your capability, the world opens up for you. You're in a position to take on greater challenges or to cope better with the ones you struggle to face.

Beliefs and values

You can read in Chapter 3 how beliefs and values direct your life, and yet often you may not be aware of them. What you believe to be true is often going to be different from what another person believes to be true. We're not talking about beliefs in the sense of religion, but instead your perception at a deep, often unconscious, level. Your beliefs and values change over time.

ANECDOTE

Caroline spent the first 15 years of her career in a high-profile media company where she was seen as very talented and singled out for leadership training. Increasingly, she felt that she wanted to work for a charitable organization that made a real difference in the world. Finally, she made the brave move to join a global charity, in a lower-paid yet still very responsible role. At the same time, as a divorced mum, she found bringing up her young son with very little practical help from her ex-husband extremely difficult.

The job move proved to be a huge culture shock, forcing Caroline to identify her values for the first time in her life. Ethical behavior, collaboration, and respect came out top of her list of values. She'd made the unconscious assumption that a charity would demonstrate these values yet instead found herself in a cut-throat and unpleasant environment. She also encountered colleagues who bullied her in the same way as her ex-husband, which triggered her anxiety.

Caroline came for NLP coaching with Kate, suffering from a crisis of confidence, especially since her divorce: She had lost sight of her own strong capabilities. She seriously doubted whether she'd made the right job move. Over a period of several months, she learned to hold onto her values and model the kind of behavior that she expected from those around her. She taught them the power of collaboration in place of bullying and challenged bad behavior with good humor, making her office a more fun place to work. Ultimately, her belief in the value of the organization's work enabled her to be more flexible and to recognize that sometimes her colleagues were acting badly for a reason. By building greater rapport with some difficult characters, she realized many were feeling very insecure about money as they lurched from one short-term contract to the next. Caroline took control of her choices once more.

Values are the things that are important to you, what motivate you to get out of bed in the morning, or not — such as health, wealth, or happiness. Beliefs and values, and the way people rank them in order of importance, are different for each person and change over time. For this reason, motivating a whole team of

people with the same approach is extremely difficult. One size doesn't fit all where beliefs and values are concerned.

Values are also rules that keep people on the socially acceptable road. You may seek money, but your values of honesty and respect for others stop you from stealing cash. Sometimes, a conflict exists between two important values — such as family life and work. You can read more about fixing this problem in Chapter 3.

In terms of making change, understanding your beliefs and values offers huge leverage. When people value something or believe it enough, that value becomes an energizing force for change. They're concentrating on what's truly important to them, doing what they really want to be doing and becoming closer to who they want to be. These people are in a place that feels right and natural. Beliefs and values drive you and influence the lower levels of capability, behavior, and environment. So, by sticking to your values, other logical levels begin to come into alignment.

ANECDOTE

Often we coach people who hop from one job to another with a sense of increasing dissatisfaction and are desperate to find a job they love. IT director John is a case in point. Every two years or so he'd get fed up, decide that he needed a change, and apply for another, similar, job with more money, a better benefits package, and in a new location, hoping that things would be better somewhere else. He simply made changes at the environmental level — new company, new country, and new people.

As he began to evaluate his values and beliefs he realized that some essential ingredients were missing. He'd invested time and energy into studying for an MBA and valued professional learning and development as important. Yet he always ended up in "hire and fire" organizations that were too busy to invest in their staff or to work strategically: places that drained his energy. His beliefs and values didn't match those of the organizations in which he worked. When he understood this discrepancy, he took his skills to a prestigious international business school that valued his education and skills and gave him the opportunity to develop further.

Here are some beliefs and values questions to ask yourself when you sense that a conflict exists at this logical level that's hindering you getting what you want:

- » What factors are important to you in this situation?
- » What's important to those around you?
- » What do you believe to be true right now?

- » What has to be in place for you to feel content?

- » When do you say *must*, *should*, *must not*, and *should not*? What assumptions lie behind these statements about what's possible?

- » What are your beliefs about this person or situation? Are they helpful? What beliefs may help you get better results?

- » What would somebody else believe if placed in your shoes?

Armed with the answers to these questions, you may want to work on your beliefs and values to ensure that they support you through difficult times. As you question your beliefs about yourself, you may choose to discard some that no longer serve you well. For example, you may have always believed that you must have a particular qualification to call yourself "a success." Or a mortgage before having a family. Or even that people with a certain color hair have more fun!

TIP

In business change-management programs, you often hear talk of "winning the hearts and minds" of people. If you're leading a group of people, you need to address their beliefs and values. When you have the right beliefs firmly in place, NLP suggests that the lower levels — such as capabilities and behaviors — fall into place automatically.

Identity

Identity describes your sense of who you are. You may express yourself through your beliefs and values, capabilities, behaviors, and environment, and yet you're more than all these factors. NLP assumes that your identity is separate from your behavior and recommends that you remain aware of the difference. In other words, you're more than what you do.

NLP separates the intention that lies behind your action from the action itself. For this reason, NLP avoids labelling people. A phrase such as "men behaving badly," for example, doesn't mean that men are intrinsically bad, just that some male behavior is bad behavior.

TIP

If you want your feedback to encourage learning and better performance, always make it very specific about what someone says or does in terms of the behavior rather than commenting at the identity level. So, instead of saying "John, sorry mate, but you were just awful," try "John, it was difficult to hear you at the meeting because you looked at your phone all the time and were unprepared for key questions."

Here are some identity questions to ask yourself when you experience a sense of conflict in terms of your identity:

>> How is what you're experiencing an expression of who you are?

>> What kind of person are you?

>> How do you describe yourself?

>> What labels do you put on yourself and other people?

>> How would others describe you?

>> Would other people think of you as you want?

>> What pictures, sounds, or feelings are you aware of as you think about yourself?

REMEMBER

A greater awareness of self is a valuable insight in any journey of personal development. Too often people try to change others, when changing themselves would be a more effective starting point.

Purpose

This "beyond-identity" level connects you to the larger picture when you begin to question your purpose, ethics, mission, or meaning in life. Purpose takes individuals into the realms of spirituality and their connection with a bigger order of things in the universe, and it leads organizations to define their *raison d'être*, vision, and mission.

Human survival amid incredible suffering depends on true acceptance of your circumstances that goes beyond identity. Witness the resilience of the Dalai Lama, driven from his homeland of Tibet, or the story of Viktor Frankl's endurance of the Holocaust in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, 2006).

TIP

A sudden change in life circumstances such as a bereavement, relationship break up, or being laid off changes your sense of purpose. Things didn't turn out as you hoped and dreamed. Be kind to yourself as you come to terms with the change that affects you at every logical level.

Here are some purpose questions to ask yourself when you want to check whether you're steering your life in the right direction:

>> How do you make a difference?

>> For what reason are you here?

> » What would you like your contribution to others to be?
>
> » What impact do you have on the wider world?
>
> » How would you like to be remembered when you die?

TRY THIS

Simon Sinek, the brain behind the Golden Circle theory, argues for the power of passion and beliefs when he suggests that people don't buy *what* you do or *how* you do it. They buy *why* you do it. The theory can be visualized as three concentric circles: At the center is "Why" (your purpose or belief); in the middle is "How" (your values and processes); and at the outside is the "What," which refers to what you actually do, such as the products, services, or skillset that you bring.

This speedy idea reinforces the more detailed logical levels and the power of shifting your thinking to the higher layers above skills. Passion is gripping and inspirational, yet most people get stuck talking about what they do and how they do it. If we apply Sinek's idea to a widget manufacturer, the reasoning would go something like this: "*What* we do is make really cost-effective widgets that we sell all around the world. *How* we do it is by employing the best designers and sourcing the very best and strongest metals. *Why* we do it is that we believe in using the latest technology to make the world a safer place." Can you see that the *why* is more engaging?

To draw your own Golden Circle, sketch three concentric circles and label the bull's eye at the center "Why?" the second circle "How?" and the outer circle "What?" Getting to the passion at the core will take you beyond the whats and hows. Find the words to articulate your passion in any area of your life, from coaching the junior football team to your career, and you'll add an emotional element to your communication more speedily.

Figuring Out Other People's Levels: Language and Logical Levels

The intonation in people's language — the way they speak — offers clues to the level at which they're operating. Take the simple phrase, "I can't do it here," and listen to where the stress (shown in italics) is placed:

"*I* can't do it here" = statement about identity

"I *can't* do it here" = statement about belief

"I can't *do* it here" = statement about capability

"I can't do *it* here" = statement about behavior

"I can't do it *here*" = statement about environment

When you know the level at which someone is operating, you can help that person to make change at that level. For example, if they're working at the environmental level, the question to ask is, "If not here, where can you do it?" If they're at the identity level, the question is, "If not you, who can do it, then?"

Teambuilding at Work and Play: A Logical Levels Exercise

We say throughout this book that NLP is experiential, which means that to get the benefit of many of the NLP exercises, you sometimes have to move physically as well as mentally — something that we encourage in both one-on-one and team NLP coaching sessions. As NLP developer Robert Dilts puts it, "Knowledge is just a rumor until you get it in the muscle."

TRY THIS

This exercise helps you to brainstorm with your team. You can lay out pieces of paper on the floor and walk through the different levels or use chairs, as in this version. You can set this exercise to some baroque music to get the ideas flowing and speed it up as a musical-chairs game — and you may want someone to capture ideas on a flipchart. Follow these steps:

1. **Appoint one person to lead the exercise, ask the questions, and capture the answers.**

   This person is your question master.

2. **Place six chairs in a line; place a label on each chair to denote the logical level.**

3. **Sit one team member on each of the chairs.**

4. **Have the question master ask each person in turn questions according to the logical level of each chair.**

   Here are the questions to ask the team at each level:

   - *Environment chair:* Where, when, and with whom does this team work best?

   - *Behavior chair:* What does this team do well?

- *Capability chair:* How do we do what we do when we work well?

- *Beliefs and values chair:* Why is this team here? What's important to us?

- *Identity chair:* Who is this team?

- *Purpose chair:* How does this team contribute to the bigger picture? What is our mission in relation to others?

5. **After all the team members have answered their questions, let them move to a different chair; then repeat the questions until each team member has taken their turn at every level.**

Keep people moving fairly promptly — they can always come around twice. When you've captured your brainstorming answers, the next step is to sift and work through the information you've gathered to spot patterns and new ideas to build on your strengths as a team and decide what might be even better in future.

Try this exercise at key times such as the start of a new year or project or when you want to review a piece of work, celebrate its success, and learn from it for the future. Virtual teams can get creative by working through this exercise online.

IN THIS CHAPTER

» **Understanding the psychology behind your habits and behaviors**

» **Using strategies to improve communication**

» **Blending strategies with logical levels**

» **Applying knowledge of strategies to overcome road rage**

» **Discovering how to spell well**

Chapter **12**

Driving Habits: Uncovering Your Secret Programs

When you wake up in the morning, do you brush your teeth first or shower first? Like everyone else, you have a strategy — in this case, a sequence of steps — for carrying out your routine tasks, whether you're cutting a loaf of bread, washing your hands, or completing your tax return. And like many other people, you may not even be aware that you do things on automatic pilot.

TECHNICAL STUFF

A *strategy* is any internal and external set or order of experiences that consistently produces a specific outcome.

When Romilla was studying yoga, her teacher Swami Ambikananda, asked the class members to gain a greater understanding of the unconscious rituals that they used. She suggested that they start their day by changing the regular sequence they followed for getting dressed, eating breakfast, and preparing to go to work. Boy, did that scramble the brain! Real concentration was necessary to keep the

rest of the day running smoothly. Romilla felt as if she'd forgotten something crucial and her brain kept trying to remember what it was. The overall experience was very uncomfortable.

You use your personal strategies for all sorts of behavior: feeling loved; loving your partner, parent, child, or pet; hating someone; getting irritable with someone; buying your favorite perfume; learning to drive; achieving, or not, health, wealth, and happiness; and so on.

Perhaps you ask yourself from time to time, "Why am I successful in some areas of my life and not as successful in others?" Well, you may find that you're simply using less-effective strategies in those less-successful areas. The great thing is that when you realize that you're running a strategy, you can more easily develop the tools to change those strategies that are less effective. Even better, you can find someone else's strategy that works well and copy it! You can find out more about how you can do this in Chapter 19 on modeling.

In this chapter, you discover the mechanics behind how you think, feel, and behave. Armed with this insight, you can add to, modify, or delete your strategies. This puts you firmly in the driving seat of your life because you can consciously take ownership of how you respond to your environment.

Witnessing the Evolution of Strategies

The NLP strategy model came about through a process of evolution. It started with behavioral psychologists such as Watson, Skinner, and Pavlov and was enhanced by Miller, Galanter, and Pribram, who were cognitive psychologists, before being refined by NLP's founding fathers, Grinder and Bandler.

The S–R model

Back in the early part of the twentieth century, behavioral psychologists based their work on the study of human and animal behavior. They proposed that people either respond to a stimulus (S) or develop a response (R) through conditioning or reinforcement. The most famous of the studies was that of Pavlov and his dogs. The dogs heard a bell that they associated with the arrival of food (stimulus) and therefore salivated (response). Ultimately, the dogs salivated merely at the sound of the bell (without the food). A behaviorist may argue that humans simply respond to stimuli in a similar way. For example, when John's baby gurgles and smiles (stimulus), John feels a warm glow (response) or when Mark sees an unhoused person on the pavement (stimulus), he reaches for spare coins in his pocket (response).

Although behaviorist ideas remain influential in modifying behavior, most people generally agree that humans have more sophisticated powers of thought.

The TOTE model

Miller, Galanter, and Pribram built on the S–R model of behaviorism and presented the TOTE (Test, Operate, Test, Exit) model, which is illustrated in Figure 12-1. The TOTE model works on the principle that you have a goal in mind when you exhibit a particular behavior. The purpose of your behavior is to get as close to your desired outcome as possible. You test your strategy in order to assess whether you've reached your goal. If your goal is reached, you stop the behavior and exit the strategy. If the goal isn't reached, you modify the behavior and repeat it, thereby incorporating a simple feedback and response loop. So, if your outcome is to boil the kettle, the test is whether the kettle has boiled; if it hasn't, you carry on waiting for it to boil, test for the kettle having boiled, and when it has, you exit the strategy.

TEST: Has your goal been achieved?	NO Loop around	OPERATE: If your goal hasn't been achieved, modify your behavior.

YES
Exit
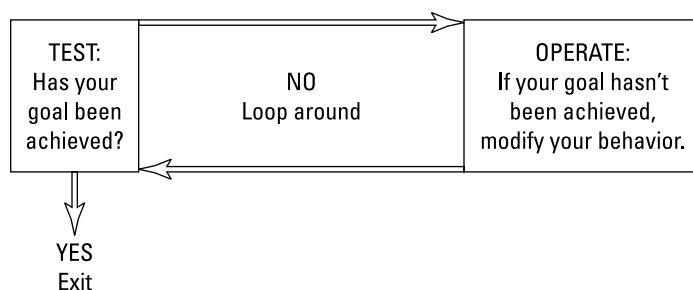
FIGURE 12-1: The TOTE model.

The NLP strategy = TOTE + modalities

NLP suggests that you experience the world primarily through your five senses: visual (eyes), auditory (ears), kinesthetic (feelings and touch), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). These senses are your *representational (rep) systems*, also called *modalities*, which you can read more about in Chapter 5.

Submodalities are the different qualities that combine to make up modalities. For example, if you create a picture in your mind's eye, you're using your visual representative system or modality. You adjust the qualities or submodalities of the picture by making it bigger or brighter, or bringing it closer to you. In Chapter 10, you can discover much more about your submodalities and how they affect the way you experience your world.

Bandler and Grinder included modalities and submodalities in the Test and Operate phases of the TOTE model, refining it further to create the NLP strategy model. According to Bandler and Grinder, the goal you have in mind when you initiate a strategy to achieve a specific outcome, and the means by which you assess whether it's been achieved, is dependent on combinations of your personal modalities. For example, when you think of your goal, you may make a picture of it, create a sound that you hear in your head, or get a feeling.

The success of your strategy ties into the success of your goal, and you judge success by whether you feel, hear, or see what you imagined you would through the submodalities.

The NLP strategy model in action

This section shows how the NLP strategy model works for someone enacting a basic road-rage strategy. The TOTE model (take a look at Figure 12-1) is enriched by adding modalities to create the NLP strategy model, which can be used to understand how someone operates a particular pattern of behavior.

Figure 12-2 illustrates the process in action.
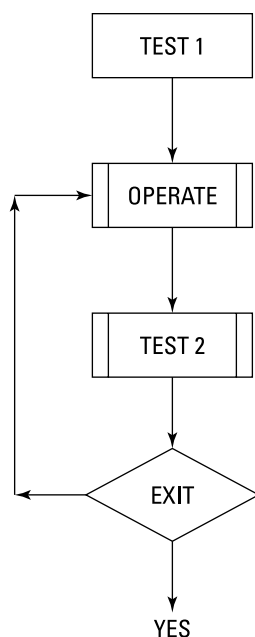
FIGURE 12-2:
The NLP strategy model.

Here's how the NLP strategy model works:

1. **Test 1** is the initial trigger that starts off a strategy. Here, you assess whether the information you're receiving from your senses complies with the data necessary to fire off the strategy. If you're prone to road rage, the trigger may be that you see someone undertaking and pushing in front of you in a traffic jam (visual confirmation), but because you're in a good mood (no kinesthetic confirmation) you choose not to run the strategy. However, if you're in bad mood (kinesthetic confirmation) your road rage strategy kicks in.

2. **Operate** is when you launch your strategy: Grip the wheel tighter, maybe even throw in a rude hand gesture (kinesthetic modality), flash your lights (visual modality), honk the horn, shout, mutter choice words (auditory modality).

3. **Test 2** is when you determine if the driver acknowledged the transgression that's so offended you and apologized? Do you feel better yet? If the answer is still no, you loop around for another round of **Operate** and **Test 2**.

4. **Exit** is the stage when the other driver apologizes or turns off, or maybe your rage burns out, and you exit the loop, probably feeling shaken as a result of the cortisol surge, aware of how unnecessary and potentially dangerous your reaction was, and even more stressed than before.

ANECDOTE

During her NLP Master Program, Romilla was asked to break a piece of fairly solid wood with her hand, and she was worried about failing this test. Her strategy for psyching herself up was to see the board breaking (visual), feel energy in her solar plexus and pulsing up her chest and down her arm (kinesthetic), and say repeatedly, "You can do it" (auditory digital). Here's how this approach fits into the TOTE model:

1. **Test 1:** Stepping up to breaking the board is the trigger that starts this strategy.

2. **Operate:** Romilla's strategy for psyching herself up used the visual, kinesthetic, and auditory digital modalities.

3. **Test 2:** Testing whether she was sufficiently psyched up.

4. **Exit:** Romilla looped around to operate the strategy, building up her confidence until she was ready. When she was ready, she exited to the actual board-break strategy.

The Eyes Have It: Recognizing Another's Strategy

Each personal strategy has distinct stages, such as Test 1 (Trigger), Operate, Test 2 (Compare), and Exit (as discussed in the preceding section, "The NLP strategy model in action") that use your five senses (check out the earlier section "The NLP strategy = TOTE + modalities"). Consider the following example: Ben has just started college and uses the following strategy for telephoning home:

1. Feels that he's missing home: Test 1 (kinesthetic)
2. Makes a mental picture of his family: Operate (visual)
3. Says the phone number to himself: Operate (auditory digital)
4. Dials home: Operate (kinesthetic)

For the purpose of this exercise, we assume that Ben's call gets through, satisfying his Test 2, and so he exits the dial-home strategy.

When a strategy of your own is embedded in your neurology, you have little or no conscious awareness of its steps. Yet, if you know what to look for, you can figure out other people's strategies. Just look for their eye movements.

REMEMBER

You can get a pretty good idea of how people are thinking about a topic (in images, words, or emotions) by watching their eyes. Generally, people's eyes move in the following ways (you can find out more about the secrets that your eyes give away in Chapter 5).

Think back to Ben and his phone call and imagine that you're watching him as he phones home. At first, his eyes go down and to his right (feeling of missing home), and then to the top and to his left (visual picture of his family) before he calls.

REMEMBER

How a person's eyes move depends on whether that person is right- or left-handed. Left-handed people may tend to look to the top and their right when they make a visual memory. So when you're trying to figure out someone else's strategy, always calibrate that person's responses by asking a few innocuous questions such as, "Which route did you take to get here?" Such questions force the person into visual recall and give you a clue as to which eye strategy (left- or right-handed) is being used.

Flexing Your Strategy Muscles

Throughout your life, you continually develop strategies. You create most of the basic ones when you're young, such as walking, eating, drinking, and choosing and making friends. You develop others as you come across new circumstances in life. Sometimes you find that a particular strategy isn't as effective as someone else's, perhaps because that person is starting from a more informed base or had a good teacher.

Recognizing that a strategy may have grounds for improvement is a useful tool. If, say, a colleague is cleverer at negotiating a higher salary than you for the same job, perhaps they present their successes to the boss more effectively than you do. If so, maybe you should work out and implement their strategy.

You can discover how they built and maintain rapport with your boss. They may have a very good strategy for keeping your boss apprised of progress of their projects and staying on your boss's radar. You can take the same strategy on board by reporting your progress regularly and gaining stronger visibility. Perhaps your colleague is more confident about approaching your boss with solutions to problems whereas you may be more diffident in your approach because you know you have a problem and expect help in finding a solution rather than offering possible solutions of your own.

Instead of being tough on yourself when you recognize a less-effective strategy, set yourself what we call a "well-formed outcome" for an area of your life in which you want to raise your game. Chapter 4 shows how you can easily create such an outcome when you break the task down into smaller steps. If you want to learn something especially fast, find someone who already does it and hang out with them to discover their strategy (as we describe in the earlier section, "The Eyes Have It: Recognizing Another's Strategy").

Linking strategies and the logical levels model

Chapter 11 explains the NLP logical levels model, which enables you to examine the structure of your experience in the following different ways: purpose, identity, values and beliefs, capabilities and skills, behavior, and environment.

Your strategies are affected by every logical level, although not necessarily all of them at once. A strategy is triggered in certain situations and manifests itself in

your behavior. Taking the earlier example of road rage — it doesn't happen all the time, certainly not when you're cruising down an open road. So, in this case, it's affected by the environment you find yourself in, maybe a traffic jam, switching lanes on the highway, or slow-moving traffic. Perhaps you're in a bad mood because you're running late, which violates your value of being on time. You believe that people who keep you waiting are rude and disrespectful, extrapolate their behavior to assuming that they don't value you as a person, and have an emotional response to feeling unvalued.

Change at any level, by default, impacts other levels. In the example of Kay, in the next section, she started off modeling Lindsay's strategies and made some self-discoveries that caused her to make changes along her logical levels to align with her purpose of financial freedom. (Chapter 19 has more on modeling.)

Acquiring new capabilities

Your strategies relate to your behaviors but may also involve making changes at the other levels too. Imagine that you want to improve your strategies by acquiring new skills.

ANECDOTE

Lesa always worked in an office where she felt safe and was confident in her abilities. However, she had a niggling sense of something being missing from her life and decided to achieve her long-held dream of setting up her own business. She discovered that she had to develop a whole raft of new behaviors, one of which was networking in order to spread word of her new venture. Unfortunately, when she attended networking meetings, she usually left without having achieved anything concrete. She was too vague about her objectives and thought only that she was going to meet new people who may prove useful in her business.

Lesa realized that she needed to develop new strategies for connecting effectively with new people. She achieved this objective by observing her friend Lindsay, who was a very successful networker. Kay started to adopt Lindsay's strategies (outlines of which are listed next, along with how Lesa used each step) and began to make successful new contacts.

1. **Think of the outcome you want from a networking event.**

   Lesa decides she wants to exchange contact information with at least six people who may be useful to her (and she useful to them), in a business or social context. If a list is available, she starts by checking the names of people who will be attending and looking them up on LinkedIn.

2. **Go up to someone and introduce yourself.**

Lesa says, "Hello, I'm Lesa and you are?"

3. **Ask questions to break the ice.**

Lesa's questions include

"This is my first time here. Have you been before?"

"How do you find these events?"

"Have you traveled far?"

"What line of business are you in?"

4. **Stay focused on what the other person is saying as well as your outcome for the event.**

Lesa realized she often got so absorbed in conversation that she forgot to get their contact details or connect with others. To stay focused, she now holds her phone in her left hand, leaving her right free to shake hands and her mind anchored on her goal. It becomes a subtle physical reminder of her purpose for attending. (You'll find more on anchors in Chapter 9.)

As Lesa's confidence grew, she uncovered a core value she hadn't been aware of before. Lesa is a good listener because she's interested in people. She was very surprised to come across people who were so focused on themselves that they showed no interest in her, her work, or her reasons for attending. It became clear to her that her value — everyone deserves to be heard — was being violated. She decided to be more discerning about how much time she spent with people and whom she chose to engage with.

Lesa decided to change where she networked (environment) to meet more like-minded people (values and beliefs) who had similar business goals to her own and a similar level of capabilities and skills. She was delighted with a moment of self-discovery: although her goal in starting her business was financial freedom, it was just one element supporting her deeper life purpose — to live a joyful, loving life.

Chances are that in this day and age, you are likely doing some or all your networking online. You can easily adapt Lesa's strategy to online networking and breakout rooms by doing the following things:

» You can still set the outcome for what you want from networking with the people in the group.

» Jot down the instructions the host or moderator has given before you're sent into a breakout room. People often forget what's expected of them once the

session starts. If you can remind others of the task and keep an eye on the time, you'll naturally come across as organized, capable of quietly commanding respect, and memorable.

» If there aren't clear instructions on what to do in the breakout room, remember to give your name and a short introduction about what you do to get the results for your clients that they want.

» If allowed, exchange email addresses in chat or connect immediately on LinkedIn.

Recoding your programs

Strategies can be changed. In the road-rage example in the earlier section "The NLP strategy model in action," whose agenda and best interests are you fulfilling? When you reflect on how anger and stress can physically damage your body, surely not your own. How about developing another strategy, such as the following:

1. **Test 1 — Trigger:** Someone cuts you off while driving.

2. **Operate:** Instead of accessing all your best rude words and gestures, think about the sun collapsing into a planetary nebula in about 5 billion years' time when all this angst will be completely pointless, tell yourself, "This too will pass." — and give yourself a little internal smile and count your blessings instead.

3. **Test 2 — Compare:** Does your strategy for staying positive work? If so, move to step 4; if not, return to the previous step and try an alternative strategy, such as seeing them rushing to meet their boss for a disciplinary meeting about their lack of punctuality — for which they are already late! Or compliment yourself on being better organized and more in control of your life.

4. **Exit:** Choose to follow your own agenda and exit.

Chinese Qigong practitioners know that the "internal smile" technique used in step 2 improves their immune system, gets the brain working more efficiently and can reduce blood pressure, anxiety, and simple depression.

Grasping the importance of the "how"

NLP is interested more in process — how you do something — than in the content of your experience. So the issue isn't that you get angry when you lose at badminton (content), but rather how you go about getting angry when you lose a game (process).

Because NLP is concerned with the process of your strategy, discovering and analyzing that process helps you to change a strategy that doesn't provide the desired results. So, instead of smashing your badminton racket, you construct a visual image of paying a hefty credit card bill for another expensive racket. And because strategies can be modified, you can use the model of the way you do something successfully to improve another area in your life in which you don't feel you do as well.

TRY THIS

Identify an area of your life in which you're successful and ask yourself, "What strategy am I running now that I'm succeeding?" We call this exercise playing the "as if" game. Suppose you consider yourself a fairly successful badminton player and have always wanted to take up running. Every time you start running, however, you give up because you just can't keep up the momentum. So you think about running "as if" you're playing badminton. While examining the strategies you operate while playing badminton, you learn that your breathing and mental focus are different when you're running around the court to when you're running on the track. By applying the strategies that you use when you play badminton to when you run, you may find that you achieve your desire of becoming a more successful runner.

ANECDOTE

Tim was extremely tidy and organized at the office. Unfortunately his home was a mess: he was just unable to keep a tidy house. Romilla coached Tim to help him identify the processes he used in the office to keep his work area tidy. He examined his strategy as follows:

1. **Test 1 — Trigger:** He saw papers and folders on his desk at work and decided he wanted to see clear space.

2. **Operate:** Tim would do the following:
   - Imagine his boss walking in and commenting on his untidiness. (Interestingly, the boss's tone of voice was very similar to the one Tim's mother used when he was a child.)
   - Get an uncomfortable feeling in his solar plexus.
   - Picture where the files went.
   - Get up and file away the papers and folders.

3. **Test 2 — Compare:** He looked at his desk, saw clear desk space, and experienced a warm feeling in his solar plexus.

4. **Exit:** If Tim didn't see enough desk space, he didn't get the warm feeling and he proceeded to tidy up further, before he exited his strategy.

By understanding his "tidy desk" strategy at work, Tim was able to keep a tidy home. He organized his cupboards to enable him to tidy things away. When no floor was visible, he imagined his boss walking in and ran his strategy to keep his home tidy — a very successful transference of strategies.

Often people have a very successful strategy in one area of their life that can be beneficial elsewhere. NLP calls this process of bringing a behavior from one area to another "mapping across." NLP coaches are adept at finding clients' natural resourcefulness by taking a whole-life perspective.

Using NLP Strategies for Love and Success

You behave in a particular way because you've learned a strategy, usually unconsciously, or developed a strategy to carry out a particular function. For instance, if your eyesight in one eye is weaker than the other, you may have discovered, unconsciously, to hold reading material directly in front of the stronger eye by moving your head.

The following sections show you how you can discern or be taught the modalities of others to help you discover new skills in relationships, communication, and spelling.

Ask other people questions in order to elicit their strategies. For example, ask, "How do you know when you need to go to the gym?" and then watch their eyes as they give their response (as we discuss in the earlier section "The Eyes Have It: Recognizing Another's Strategy"). This reaction gives you clues as to people's strategies, one of which may be to drop their eyes down and to the right to access the feeling (assuming you've calibrated for them being right handed). If you have any doubt, fine-tune the question and repeat!

Loving the deep love strategy

Everyone has a particular strategy for making them feel truly loved. We call this the *deep love strategy*. When someone comes along who satisfies that deep love strategy, bingo! On go the rose-tinted glasses for Mr. or Ms. Right.

When you meet someone to whom you're attracted or you find interesting, initially you fire all your sensory modalities (which we discuss earlier in the section "The NLP strategy = TOTE + modalities"):

>> **Visual:** You make the effort to look good. Perhaps you wear the color you've discovered the object of your interest likes. You look deeply into those gorgeous blue/green/brown eyes.

>> **Auditory:** You speak in dulcet tones and say the words you think the person wants to hear.

>> **Kinesthetic:** You hold hands. You stroke the other person.

>> **Olfactory:** You make yourself smell good. Mmmm! Hope the perfume isn't too overwhelming. Oops! Forgot the mouthwash!

>> **Gustatory:** You create candle-lit dinners with herbs and spices to prove that this someone is really special.

The person you desire is hooked and you walk into the sunset hand in hand. But then — after some time — you experience rumblings of discontent. "What went wrong?" you cry. Nothing really. Perhaps you and your partner just reverted to the modality in which you operate most naturally. So, where the wife may be craving physical contact with hugs and cuddles to feel loved, the husband may be proving his love by doing all he can for her, like keeping the house in good repair and washing the car and keeping it topped up with fuel or fully charged if it's electric.

To find a person's strategy for feeling loved, try saying words to the effect, "You know I love you, don't you?" and "What would make you feel even more loved?" As you do, pay attention to the eye movements we show in Figure 12-3. "Uh, I'm not sure," with the eyes going to the bottom right (K), is a clue that more cuddles are in order. If the eyes move to the horizontal left (A^r), try asking what the person may like to hear you say. Test your hunch after you've made this observation.

FIGURE 12-3: The eyes reveal the strategy.

V^r A^r A_d K
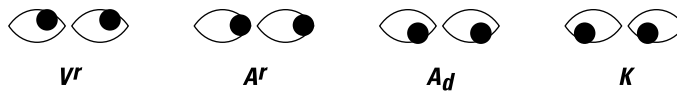
REMEMBER

Here are a couple of things to bear in mind:

>> Ask your questions in a special, quiet time when just the two of you are present, and not at moments of high stress, such as in a traffic jam — we guarantee you won't like the response you get.

>> Calibrate the response you get when you do something for the other person. For example, does bringing home a bunch of roses or a large steak get you that special response?

In NLP, *calibration* is the process by which you read another person's response to your communication. A slap in the face is a pretty overt response and, we hope, you never repeat the words or behavior that earned it. Most responses are much more subtle: a scowl, a puzzled look, flushed cheeks, a clenched jaw. A master communicator needs to be able to assess these reactions, particularly when the signals are mixed; for example, a smile with a puzzled look may indicate that the person doesn't get what you're saying but is too polite to say so.

Nothing succeeds like positive feedback in achieving your own strategy, so let other people know when they hit the mark, especially if you're aware of your beloved's deep love strategy.

Romilla knows a couple who've been very happily married for 27 years. The wife needs to have her face stroked in a specific way, with a particular look in her husband's eyes, for her to feel as if she's the center of her husband's world; you can almost hear her purr!

Influencing people with strategies

By using your knowledge of strategies, you can make yourself an irresistible communicator. When you discover people's strategies, you can use them as a framework to feed information back to people, using the steps of their own strategies. For example, suppose that you want to use your teenage daughter's strategy to help her do her homework.

In order to feed information back using the teen's own strategy, you first need to determine what that strategy is. So you ask a question such as, "How do you motivate yourself to play basketball?" and watch the teen's eye movements as she answers your question. Suppose that your question elicits the following verbal response with the accompanying eye movements shown in Figure 12-3 in the preceding section:

> I see myself in my uniform, with the rest of the team [eyes move to her top left — V^r], and I hear everyone talking excitedly [eyes move to her left, horizontally — A^r]. I say to myself, "We're going to win" [eyes move to her bottom left — A_d], and I feel really good [eyes move to her bottom right — K].

Based on the teen's answer and her eye movements, you can craft your response accordingly. You know that to motivate herself, she remembers a picture (V^r), and then she remembers the excited chatter of the team members (A^r). She then talks to herself (A_d) before, finally, feeling (K) good. Based on this information, you can use the following approach:

>> "Can you recall the picture of when you finished your physics homework on time last week?"

You're asking her to make a picture of the time when she actually finished her homework, forcing her into the start of her strategy (V^r).

>> "When your teacher really praised you, do you remember what they said?"

You're asking her to recall the words that were used in order to fire the next step of her motivation strategy (A^r).

>> "Can you remember the wonder with which you said to yourself, 'For the first time, I really understand physics!'?"

By asking her to repeat her conversation with herself, you're directing her into the penultimate step of her motivation strategy (A_d).

>> "Do you remember how elated you felt, and wouldn't it be great to finish your homework now and get that elated feeling back again?"

In this final step, you're making the teenager motivate herself by hooking into feeling good (K) and suggesting that she can recreate feeling good by getting her homework finished.

TRY THIS

You can use this technique any time you need to be really persuasive. First, ask a question and watch the eyes as the person responds, and then phrase your suggestions in language that gets you the best response.

Spelling out the NLP spelling strategy

As with other strategies, every literate person has a strategy for spelling. The good spellers have an effective strategy; the poor spellers have an ineffective strategy.

Spelling well is a very visual process. If you class yourself as a good speller, you may naturally look up to your top left (visual recall) when you visualize the word you want to spell. This action means that you've memorized pictures of words and built them into a library; you can then draw upon this store of words when you spell.

WARNING

Trying to spell phonetically is usually an ineffective spelling strategy. You may be looking down and getting caught in feelings (kinesthetic) or to the side to recall how a word sounds (auditory).

TRY THIS

If you spell phonetically and want to be better at spelling, try the following:

1. **Choose a word that you want to remember how to spell, write it in big letters, and keep it nearby.**

2. **Think of a word that you can spell.**

We ask you to spell a word you know already to create a positive feeling. Sadly, when you learn to spell as a child, your teachers don't always teach you the strategy to spell well. Consequently, you may get categorized as "not the brightest student," and when asked to spell, you feel bad. Over a period of time, spelling can come to be synonymous with feeling bad. It may affect your identity, as in "I'm a bad speller" or, even worse, "I'm a poor student." Allow yourself to acknowledge any negative beliefs that may surface and be compassionate with yourself. You may not have got on with your English teacher, and learning to spell may dredge up unwanted memories, and that's okay. Gently remind yourself that you're no longer a child under the influence of an unsympathetic teacher; rather, you're an adult in control of your own life. Then give yourself permission to be as good at spelling as you can be. So play with the words and go for it.

3. **Move your eyes to visual recall (usually, your top left, if you're right-handed) and make a picture of the word you know you can spell.**

Knowing you can spell the word gives you a positive feeling (satisfied, confident, happy, and so on).

4. **Bring that positive feeling into your consciousness; focus on it and enhance it; take a deep breath and enhance it some more.**

5. **Have a quick glance at the word you want to remember how to spell.**

6. **Keep hold of the positive feeling, move your eyes to your top left, and make a picture of the new word you want to spell.**

Make sure that you make a clear, bright, big picture of the word and look at it; we mean *really look at it*.

7. **Next time you want to spell the word, move your eyes to visual recall and the word pops into your mind's eye, and you begin to believe that you can spell.**

While discussing the power of this simple spelling strategy, Kate discovered how she often uses the visual recall section of her memory to remember birthdays, shopping lists, and calendar appointments. You can also use this method to remember where you left your keys or to help remember your multiplication tables.

SOMETHING IS GHOTI-Y AROUND HERE

Robert Dilts, one of the more innovative NLP gurus, relates his experience of learning to spell as a child:

My consternation grew, however, as we began with basics — such as the names of the first ten numbers. Instead of "wun" the first number was spelled "one" (that looked like it should be pronounced "oh-nee"). There was no "W" and an extra silent "E." The second number, instead of being spelled "tu" like it sounded, was spelled "two." (As the comedian Gallagher points out, perhaps that was where the missing "W" from "one" had gone.) After "three" ("tuh-ree"), "four" ("fow-er"), and "five" ("fi-vee") I knew something was wrong, but being young, I figured it was probably just something wrong with me. In fact, when "six" and "seven" came along I started to build back some hope — but then they struck with "eight" ("ee-yi-guh-hut") and I felt like the next number looked as if it should sound — "nine" (a "ninny").

The vagaries of phonetics also weren't lost on George Bernard Shaw. He demonstrated that the word *fish* could be spelt G-H-O-T-I. GH, for example, from the end of the word *laugh*, O as pronounced in *women*, and TI as in *nation*. He was just making a point, though: GH never sounds like F at the beginning of a word and TI can't be used at the end of a word because it needs to be followed by a vowel in order to make the SH sound.

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IN THIS CHAPTER

» **Understanding your timeline**

» **Releasing the hold that negative emotions have on you**

» **Changing beliefs by going back along your timeline**

» **Discovering how you organize time**

» **Creating your future along your timeline**

Chapter **13**

Traveling in Time to Improve Your Life

Time is a core system of cultural, social and personal life. In fact, nothing occurs except in some kind of time frame.

—THE DANCE OF LIFE *(EDWARD T. HALL)*

Time displays a strange, elastic quality: It goes fast when you're engaged in something interesting and stretches when you allow yourself to get bored. Are you one of the time-rich people who has all the time in the world, or are you time poor and always struggling to fit everything in? Perhaps having time, like money, depends on where you focus your attention. Although day and night for the rich, poor, young, and old always lasts 24 hours, the perception of time is different. Some people are stuck in the past, others have their gaze firmly staring into the future, and some just live in the moment.

The American–European perception of time is a result of the Industrial Revolution, when people had to be at work in the factories at a specific time. This idea of time has a linear format, in which one event or transaction follows another. The concept of time in Latin America, Africa, Arabic countries, and some countries in the southern hemisphere has a multidimensional structure, allowing people to

operate much more in the moment. Each idea of time contains strengths and weaknesses as well as the potential to cause conflict in cross–cultural exchanges.

When Kate worked in Zurich, a city in which you can set your watch by the trains, she had some fascinating conversations with a Swiss colleague who'd married a Nigerian man. The marriage ended in divorce and one of the reasons cited was that husband and wife had very different attitudes about time. She told Kate:

> When we lived in Africa, we'd make arrangements to visit somebody or to do something at a particular time, and then on the way we may bump into somebody else. Our detour could take days while we went off to another village or waited for another relative to appear. I could never rely on my husband to keep to commitments, and he couldn't understand my haste. It was infuriating for both of us.

Time also gives your memories meaning. With NLP techniques, you can switch the meaning you give to a memory by changing the quality of the memory (for example, by switching the submodalities we explore in Chapter 10) as well as its relationship to time. In this chapter, we explore how timeline techniques enable you to work with time and memories to your advantage, including the ability to release yourself from negative emotions and limiting decisions. These tools give you the means to create the future you'd rather have without the influence of disempowering past memories.

BEST OF BOTH APPROACHES TO TIME

The problem for most Westerners, especially those who work in high-pressure organizations, is in maintaining relentless productivity at a frenetic pace. This problem is exacerbated by the demands of keeping up with new technology, the ubiquitous presence of social media, and the pressure to deliver measurable results. All of which disconnect people from their primal need for connection — both with the natural world and with each other. Yet for innovation and creativity to take place, people must be able to change the way they think, see, and experience situations to find new ways forward. This includes rethinking their relationship with time — not just how they manage it, but how they experience and respond to it. Practices like mindfulness and meditation have gained traction among senior leaders looking for more sustainable, less stressful ways of working. Such practices cultivate presence, deepen focus, and gently invite people into an "in-time" state where they are fully absorbed in the moment. This contrasts with the more linear, often rigid "through-time" project planning and management mode that dominates most organizational culture. People are measured on how they track

schedules, meet deadlines, and focus on what's *next*, rather than enjoying what's *now*. By contrast, mindful practices invite people to suspend judgment and be more open and aware to see beyond the surface problems and find deeper connections and answers. Yet how do we meditate and still get society to make progress?

In their book, *Presence* (Crown Currency, 2008), a leading team of super-intelligent thinkers — Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, Otto Scharme, and Betty Sue Flowers — describe how you need to reconnect with in-time approaches in order for change to happen. They came together in a truly mindful way over a period of time to address the question of how deep change happens in people, organizations, and societies. Given the timeless nature of their questions, it's impressive that they managed to come up with a core model at all. This model, the U movement, explains the sequence of seven key stages in the transformation process: suspending, redirecting, letting go, letting come, crystallizing, prototyping, and institutionalizing.

The group learned that the essence of change happens when people spend long enough being truly present in time and letting go of old ways of thinking until new ideas can emerge at the letting come stage. To embody the change that occurs, people then move into through time thinking to crystallize, prototype, and transform ideas into action.

Understanding How Your Memories Are Organized

TRY THIS Think of something you do on a regular basis, such as reading a book, driving to a shop, working at your desk, eating in a restaurant, or brushing your teeth. The event needs to be something that you can remember doing in the past, imagine or experience doing in the present, and also imagine doing in the future. As you access the memory or use your imagination, you code it with sensory data such as sounds, pictures, or feelings. When you access an image of the past, for example, you may also notice a difference in the quality of the pictures, to do with brightness, color, movement, two or three dimensions, and so on. These qualities, or attributes, are called submodalities (you can read more about them in Chapters 5 and 10).

By going into the past to examine a memory and then into the future — via a pit stop in the present — you've experienced a little "land-based" time travel. (You can experience the airborne variety a little later in the "Discovering Your Timeline" section.)

We ask you to consider these attributes in order to help you realize that a structure exists to your memories. You instinctively know whether a memory is in the past or whether you're creating an experience in your imagination.

People view time differently: Some are rooted in the past, others gaze firmly into the future, and some live in the moment. Research by Professor Philip Zimbardo shows that how you perceive time is pretty much unconscious and yet can have a significant influence on your behavior. Understanding whether your focus is on the past, present, or future and getting the balance right can have a dramatic effect on your levels of happiness and success. (Check out Chapter 7 to discover how to spot someone's perception of time.)

TECHNICAL STUFF

If we ask you to define what you're made up of, you may say, "sugar and spice and all things nice" or "hair, skin, and blood." But of course the whole person that makes up "you" is much more than your component parts. The term for this real-ity is *Gestalt*. A Gestalt is a structure, or pattern, which can't be derived purely from its constituent parts. So, when thinking about you, someone's mind makes the leap from your components to the whole you.

Your memories are arranged in a Gestalt. Associated memories form a Gestalt, although the formation of a Gestalt may start when you experience an event that first triggers an emotional response: a Significant Emotional Event (SEE). The SEE is also referred to as the *root cause*. If you experience a similar event and have a similar emotional response, you link the two events. This process continues and suddenly you have a chain.

One of psychology's founding fathers, William James, likened memories to "a string of bead-like sensations and images." During any work with your timeline, if you snip the string before the first occurrence, the Gestalt is broken.

Discovering Your Timeline

Memories are arranged in a pattern. If we ask you to shut your eyes and point to the direction from which a past memory came with one hand, where would you point? Similarly, if you were to point to something you're going to do in the future with the other hand, notice where you're pointing now. Can you also point to where your present is? If you draw a line between the memory from the past, the one in the present, and the one in the future, you've created your very own *timeline*.

People sometimes identify their past as being behind them and their future as in front of them. Others can have a V-shaped line, whereas some people have their past to their left and their future to their right — which is interesting because (as we discuss in Chapter 5) most people move their eyes to the left when they want to remember something and to the right when they want to imagine something that isn't real, yet. In addition, some people arrange their timeline geographically, with their past in, perhaps, Cornwall, Los Angeles, or Timbuktu, and their present where they're currently residing. Their future may lie in the place to which they want to move next.

ANECDOTE

A woman who attended Romilla's workshop "Future Perfect" (where people come to create the future they want to live) became confused while trying to find her timeline. We discovered that her past was in South Africa, her present was in England, and she was unable to decide about her future. We asked her to trust her unconscious and point her finger to where her future may be. She pointed to her front and slightly to the right. Romilla asked her to point to where she thought South Africa was. She pointed behind her but slightly to her left. By getting her to draw a line from where she saw her future to where she pictured South Africa, we were able to establish that her timeline ran in a diagonal from her left to her right.

The idea is to find a line that connects your past and future and whether you choose to do it by connecting geographical locations or simply by pointing won't affect the final result.

TIP

You may find that "drawing" an imaginary line on the ground is easier. Then, trusting your unconscious mind, you can walk along the line, from where you think your past is to where you feel your future lies.

TRY THIS

Walking along a timeline can be difficult if spatial restrictions get in the way, for example if you're in a small room. The following exercise shows you how you can visualize your timeline in your head by "floating up" to get a clear view of the timeline stretching out below you:

1. **Think of an event that you experienced recently.**

2. **Now take a deep breath and relax as deeply as you can.**

3. **Imagine yourself floating up, above your present and way above the clouds, into the stratosphere.**

4. **Picture your timeline below you, like a ribbon, and see yourself in the timeline.**

5. **Now float back over your timeline until you're directly over the recently experienced event.**

6. **You can hover there as long as you like until you decide to float back to the present and down into your own body.**

Hope you enjoyed that trial flight. Remember this process because you're going to be doing a lot of it.

Changing Your Timeline

When you've worked out your timeline as described in the preceding section, ask yourself what position it is in in relation to you. For instance, does the line run through your body as in the two *in-time* diagrams shown in Figures 13-1 and 13-2? Or is it out in front of you so that you can see the whole of your timeline before you, as in the *through-time* diagram shown in Figure 13-3?

Past   Future

FIGURE 13-1:
A straight timeline for an in-time person.

Present

Past   Future
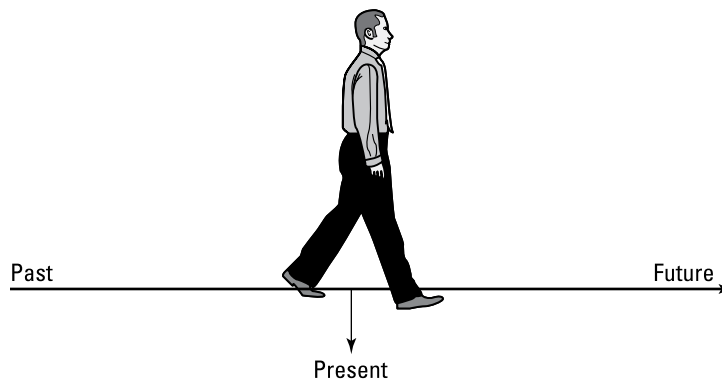
FIGURE 13-2:
A V-shaped timeline for an in-time person.

Present
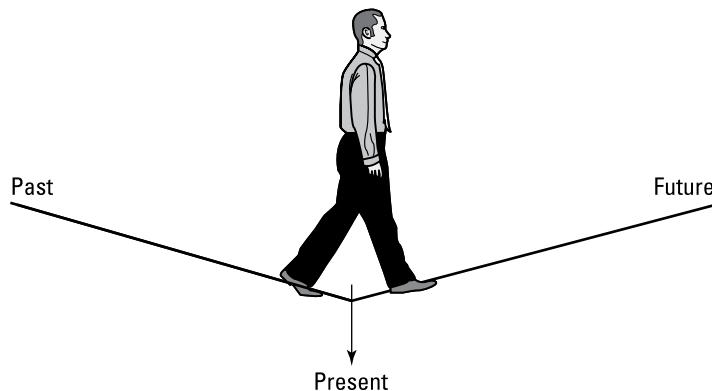
FIGURE 13-3:
An in-front
timeline for a
through-
time person.

Past ────────────────────────────── Future →

Present
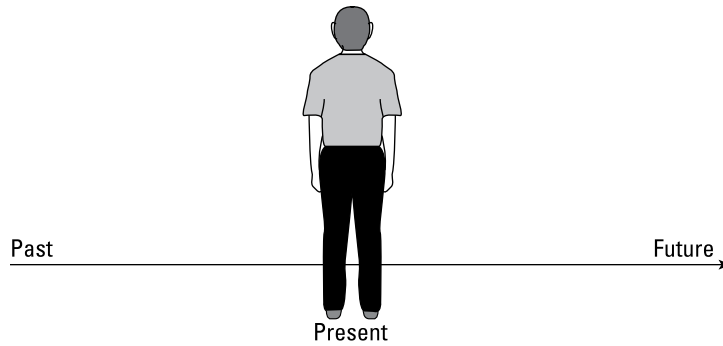
The shape of your timeline can suggest various personality traits. If you see a through-timeline, you have an American–European model of time, which means that you may display the following tendencies:

>> Able to keep your emotions separate from events

>> Conscious of turning up for appointments on time

>> Display a strong awareness of past and future events

>> Goal-oriented

>> Good at planning activities

>> Have difficulty living in the now

>> Very aware of the value of time

As a person with an in-timeline, you may have the following abilities and tendencies:

>> Creative

>> Efficient at multitasking

>> Engrossed in the current experience

>> Feel your emotions very strongly

>> Good at living in the moment

>> Prefer to keep your options open

>> Spontaneous

>> Unlikely to plan far ahead

You can change the orientation of your timeline in order to experience a different mindset without changing any of the individual memories and events that make it up. For example, if you're an in-time person and you have to keep to a time schedule, try turning your timeline so that you're through time — your timeline is in front of you. Or, if you're a workaholic and want to chill with your partner in the evening, why not pretend that your timeline is on the other side of your front door, and become an in-time person the moment you step through it.

WARNING

Switching timelines can cause some physical disorientation. For example, you can feel dizzy. So choose a quiet and relaxed time for altering your timeline instead of when you're busy rushing around. If you feel uncomfortable while changing your timeline, slow down and revert your timeline to its original orientation.

If you're a through-time person and your timeline is laid out in front, you can change that timeline by stepping onto it so that you have to turn your head or body to face the past or the future. Or you can float above your timeline in your mind's eye so that it spreads out below you; as you float back down to position yourself, the timeline is below your feet or running through your body.

If you're an in-time person, you can step off your timeline so that it spreads out in front of you and you can see your past, present, and future as a continuum, just by turning your head to your left or your right but without having to turn your body. If you prefer, you can float above your timeline and, when you float back down, position yourself so that your timeline is in front of you.

ANECDOTE

Romilla always asks delegates on the "Beyond Distress" seminars to switch timeline orientation and to maintain the different orientation over lunch, *as long as they feel comfortable*. One of the delegates, a highly in-time person, initially experienced dizziness and nausea when she put her timeline out in front of her (through time) but was keen to persevere. After sitting down for a while, she stabilized and went to lunch. On her return, her relief at switching her timeline back to an in-timeline was visible for all to see.

Apart from switching the orientation of your timeline, discovering how to change the way that you space out events on it can also be useful.

ANECDOTE

Qian was suffering from stress. He felt as though everything was pressing in on him and that he just couldn't cope with all his work. When Qian went back along his timeline, using Time Line Therapy (cocreated by Tad James), he remembered that he'd failed to qualify for a scholarship when he was a young boy. His mother was very scathing and judgmental. Qian realized that he'd been trying to please her ever since and always tried to do too much.

On examining the arrangement of his timeline, Qian discovered that he had his present up close to his nose and his future about 6 inches farther in front of that.

When we cleared up all the negative emotions behind his "failure" (flip to Chapter 2 for a more empowering term, "feedback"), Qian was able to move the present out to about a foot away and place his future farther along and up, about 3 yards away. When he stretched out his timeline in his mind, he got into a panic because he felt that stretching it too far meant he'd never again achieve anything in his life. When he shortened his timeline so that it was neither as tight as before nor so long that he felt panicky, he felt comfortable because he knew he'd be able to plan and meet his objectives.

ANECDOTE

Simon had the opposite problem to Qian: He felt that he could never meet his deadlines. On examining his timeline, Simon discovered that his future was so far out in front of him that he was unable to generate enough of a sense of urgency about his goals. Simon compressed his timeline and imagined it as a conveyor belt. He placed goals at specific distances along the belt. When Simon made his to-do list for the next day, he moved the conveyor belt one notch closer. (We talk more about making to-do lists in Chapter 4.) This method had a real impact on Simon's ability to honor his commitments.

Traveling Along Your Timeline to a Happier You

Your timeline consists of a sequence of structured memories; pictures are in color, sounds can be loud or soft, and feelings can make you feel light or weigh you down. (For more information on memory and the senses, turn to Chapter 5.) Your mind creates these memories in its own individual way; for example, if you and three other people experience the same event — perhaps you witness an accident — each of you remembers that event differently.

As you travel along your timeline, examining your memories and understanding the lessons that need to be learned can release the hold that memories have on the present, which allows you to change their structure, making them smaller, softer, or lighter as necessary. Therefore, your past no longer needs to cast a shadow on your present — or, more importantly, on your future.

Releasing negative emotions and limiting decisions

Anger, fear, shame, grief, sadness, guilt, regret, and anxiety are just a few examples of negative emotions. These feelings have value in that they make you human — and you wouldn't want to be free of the ability to experience these

emotions — but at times they have a powerful, undesired impact. They can cause physical illness and have a devastating effect on the way you conduct your life.

A *limiting decision* is one that you made in the past when, for some reason, you decided that you were unable to do something because you were too stupid, unfit, poor, or any number of other reasons. For example, you may have said, "I can never be slim," or "I'm bad at adding numbers." The limiting decision restricts your potential, thus interfering with your success.

Although you created negative emotions and limiting decisions in your past, they influence you in your present. If you can go into the past, by traveling back along your timeline and understand consciously what your unconscious mind was trying to protect you from, you can release the effect of the damaging emotions and decisions more easily.

⚠️
WARNING

Dealing with negative emotions can be an extremely powerful experience, and you must ensure that you have all the support you need. So, before you attempt to use the techniques in this section to release negative emotions or understand your limiting decisions, keep the following points in mind:

>> In order to tackle serious emotional issues, for example the trauma of child abuse, bereavement, or divorce, we definitely recommend that you see a qualified therapist.

>> Working with another person, such as a coach or NLP master practitioner, is best when examining timelines because that person can keep you grounded if you forget the exercise and succumb to the emotions you're experiencing. Someone else can also ensure that you follow the steps correctly.

The diagram shown in Figure 13-4 is very important to the following exercises because it clarifies the locations along your timeline that you need to be aware of. The diagram is particularly useful to people who are more visual — those who create pictures in their minds.
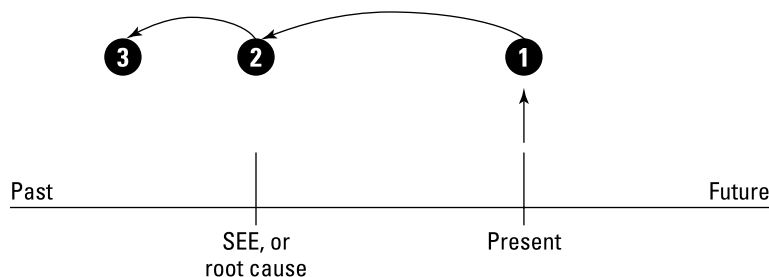
FIGURE 13-4:
Locations on
your timeline.

Past — SEE, or root cause — Present — Future

(3) (2) (1)

>> Location number 1 in the figure represents the position you float up to, which is directly above the present on your timeline.

>> Location number 2 is directly above the SEE, or root cause.

>> Location number 3 is still way above your timeline but 15 minutes before the root cause.

TRY THIS

This exercise introduces you to a process that helps you to remove the negative emotions you may be holding on to, such as being prone to inappropriate feelings of anger. Please remember to keep an open mind to the answers that your unconscious mind presents:

1. **Find yourself somewhere safe and quiet to relax and think of a mildly negative emotion you experienced in the past.**

2. **Check with yourself that learning from the event and releasing the emotion is okay.**

   When you relax, ask your unconscious mind, "Is it okay for me to let go of this anger?"

3. **Ask your unconscious mind, "What is the root cause of this problem, which, when I disconnect from it, is going to cause the problem to disappear? Was it before, during, or after my birth?"**

REMEMBER

   When you ask your unconscious mind whether the root cause was before, during, or after your birth, please keep an open mind about the answer you receive. Your unconscious mind absorbs a lot of information and makes a lot of decisions without your conscious awareness. Our coaching clients have been surprised by their responses. (For example, they may go back to a sense of the emotional trauma experienced by earlier generations in their families.)

4. **When you obtain the root cause, float way above your timeline so that you can see your past and your future stretching below you.**

   You're now at location 1 in Figure 13-4.

5. **Still above your timeline, float back along it until you're above the SEE (location 2 in Figure 13-4); Notice what you saw, felt, and heard.**

6. **Ask your unconscious mind to learn what it needs to from the event in order for it to let go of the negative emotions easily and quickly.**

7. **Float to location 3 in Figure 13-4, which is above and 15 minutes before the SEE.**

8. **As you float above your timeline at location 3, turn and face the present so you can see the root cause in front of you and below you.**

9. **Give yourself permission to let go of all the negative emotions associated with the event and notice where the negative emotions, if any, are now.**

   Have all the other negative emotions associated with the event also disappeared?

10. **If other negative emotions remain, use each exhale to release all the emotions that are associated with the SEE.**

11. **Stay at location 3 until you feel, or know, that all the negative emotions have dissipated.**

12. **When you're ready, and by that we mean when you feel you have released the negative emotions, float back to location 1.**

    Go only as fast as your unconscious mind can learn from similar events and let go of all the associated emotions.

13. **Come back down into the room.**

14. **Do a quick test: Go into the future to when an event would have triggered the emotions you let go and notice that the emotions have gone.**

> **TIP**
>
> If you don't get the results you hoped for, you may need to ask your unconscious mind to present you with the reason why you haven't let go of the emotions. The best time for this is when you're dropping off to sleep, deeply relaxed, or meditating. If you don't get an answer that you understand, you may need to work with a coach or therapist to clear issues from your past that are stopping you from getting the results you want.

> **TIP**
>
> This exercise can also be used for getting rid of a limiting decision. For example, you may have decided to remain poor or unhealthy, or made some other self-defeating decision such as "I can never be truly successful." Follow the process we outlined, using the limiting decision in place of the negative emotions.

Finding forgiveness

With hindsight and maturity, you can forgive people from your past. Such forgiveness allows you to release all the energy you had invested in resentment, anger, or other negative emotions. You can then move on and use that energy to be more creative or loving or anything positive you may want. One useful way to accomplish forgiveness is to understand the motives of the people who hurt you and realize that, because of their own issues, they were operating from a reality that provided very limited options.

As an example, imagine that you had a burning desire to become an actor, and your parents gave you a hard time about it. Now acknowledge that they were actually showing parental concern for you. (Remember the NLP presupposition from

Chapter 2 that "all behavior has a positive intent.") They were doing their best for you with the resources they had at their disposal. Go back along your timeline to when you can remember one such difficult occasion with your parents. You can then hover above your timeline while you learn any important lessons that you needed to be aware of. You can float down into the event and give your parents a hug and let them know that you realize now that they were doing their best for you. If you find it easy, you can surround yourself in a bubble of light and just enjoy the feelings of love, compassion, and forgiveness.

Comforting the younger you

When you travel back along your timeline and find an event that involves you when you were young, you can embrace the younger you, reassure yourself that all will be well, surround your two selves with light, and let them be healed. Now, imagine bringing all that joy and relief along your timeline, right into the present.

HEALING ALONG THE TIMELINE

Kate's friend, Tara, shared an inspiring experience. Tara had suffered with severely blocked sinuses since she was 18 years old. This condition was so bad that she needed antibiotics at least three or four times a year in order to alleviate the debilitating symptoms. By the time Tara attended a workshop on Time Line Therapy, she'd undergone four unsuccessful operations to clear her sinuses and been told by her doctor that she'd either have to live with her illness or remain on steroids.

During the workshop, Tara discovered that her symptoms became particularly severe when she felt overwhelmed by people and events. She explored the possibility that her physical symptoms were psychosomatic. By investigating any limiting beliefs and benefits she was gaining from her sinus problem, Tara realized that she had built a Gestalt (a structure) around illness. She remembered that, as a child, her brother had received a lot of attention from their mother because he was asthmatic, and the only time Tara became the focus was when she had tonsillitis. Tara's father also suffered with chronic sinusitis, and Tara found that her illness gave her something in common with him. She also believed that she was unable to deal with this medical condition by herself.

During the workshop, Tara realized that she was able to get attention from people without being ill, that she could ask for tender loving care and that admitting to feeling overwhelmed was okay. She went back along her timeline to where she believed the first SEE happened. She realized that it was when she first became jealous of the attention her brother received. She was able to let go of the Gestalt associated with this event and has been free of sinusitis and steroids ever since.

Getting rid of anxiety

Anxiety is simply a negative emotion about a future event. In the earlier "Releasing negative emotions and limiting decisions" section, we explain how to remove a negative emotion or limiting decision by going to *before* the event that created the emotion or when you made the decision. Similarly, you can remove anxiety by going into the future *beyond the successful conclusion* of the event about which you're anxious.

TRY THIS

Imagine what you'll see, hear, and feel when the event causing you anxiety is over and has been successful. Then, when you travel forward above your timeline to beyond the successful conclusion of the event, you find that the anxiety no longer exists. Using Figure 13-5 as a reference, follow these steps:

1. **Find yourself somewhere safe and quiet to relax and think of an event about which you're feeling anxious; check with your unconscious mind that letting go of the anxiety is okay.**

2. **Now float way above your timeline so that you can see your past and your future stretching below you.**

3. **Still above your timeline, float forward along it until you're above the event that's making you anxious.**

4. **Ask your unconscious mind to learn what it needs to from the event in order for it to let go of the anxiety easily and quickly.**

5. **When you have the necessary information, float farther into the future, along your timeline until you're 15 minutes after the successful conclusion of the event about which you were feeling anxious.**

6. **Turn and look toward it now and notice that you're calm and no longer anxious.**

TIP

In the unlikely event that some anxiety remains, relax deeply and allow your unconscious mind to present you with the reason why you haven't let go of the anxiety. It may be that you need some skills to boost your confidence. If you have a history of not being your best — at least in your opinion — at similar past events, go back along your timeline to uncover negative emotions or limiting decisions before doing the exercise again.

7. **When you're ready, float back to your present.**

8. **Do a quick test: Go into the future to the event and confirm that the anxiety no longer exists.**

FIGURE 13-5:
Time travel to overcome anxiety.

Past   Future

Present   Event about which
you are anxious
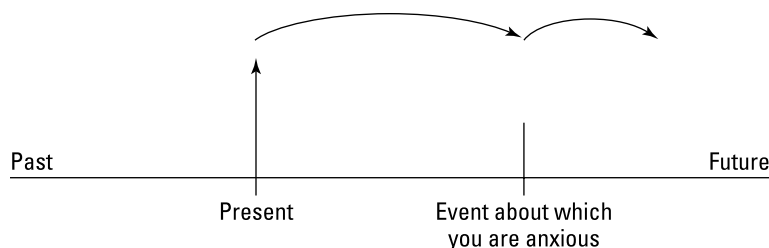
Creating a better future

When you know how to travel along your timeline, imagine taking some irresistible, compelling goals and putting them into your future, and how great that would be:

TRY THIS

1. **Find somewhere safe and quiet to relax and design your goal.**

   Chapter 4 tells you what you need to know about creating goals.

2. **Float way above your timeline so that you can see your past and your future stretching below you.**

3. **Still above your timeline, float forward along it until you're over the time by which you want to have achieved your goal.**

4. **Turn and look back to *now* and allow all the events along your timeline to align so that they support your goal, noting any actions you may have to take along the way.**

5. **When you're ready, float back to your present and back down into the room.**

REMEMBER

Always check your motives when setting and realizing your goals to ensure that they fit within all areas of your life, as we describe in Chapter 4. This process is called the *ecology check*. By really examining your reasons, you can ensure that no hidden negative emotions are driving you. For instance, if you're focusing on making a lot of money, you may want to know that the desire stems from wanting to be financially secure and able to help those less fortunate than yourself, not because you're trying to escape a poverty-stricken childhood.

Checking your motives also helps you to identify any lurking, unconscious fears — for example: "If I'm rich, people will only want to be friends because of my money, not because they like me." Analyzing these motives fully helps you to crystallize your exact reasons for your desire and allows you to take steps to overcome any unconscious issues.

Timelines may seem somewhat strange and difficult initially, but we encourage you to play and explore your relationship with time as a real-life enhancing part of your NLP toolkit.

Chapter **14**

Ensuring Smooth Running Below Decks

C an you remember participating in or watching a tug-of-war? Both sides expend an inordinate amount of energy but don't manage to move very far. Conflict, whether within yourself or with someone else, is like a tug-of-war, with two sides pulling in opposite directions and getting nowhere.

Conflict within yourself usually occurs between a conscious part of your mind and an unconscious part. Phrases like, "I don't know what came over me," or "part of me wants this but another part doesn't," are clues to unconscious conflicts. Take the example of a person who knows at a conscious level that smoking is bad for their health. Yet, they continue to smoke because at an unconscious level, they crave the companionship of their smoker friends, fear rejection, and want to avoid the discomfort of building new relationships.

The *NLP Encyclopedia of Systemic NLP and NLP New Coding* (which you can access at www.nlpu.com/NLPU.html) defines conflict as a mental struggle — often unconscious — that arises when different world maps clash. This can happen between people (interpersonal conflict) or within a person (intrapersonal conflict). Reconciling these two different maps, resolves the struggle and this chapter shows you how.

Getting to Grips with a Hierarchy of Conflict

Conflict can take place at different levels within a hierarchy, known as *logical levels* (you can find out more about these in Chapter 11). When you're considering some of the conflicts you face, understanding the level at which you need to engage is helpful. For example, if as a manager you believe that people are what make your company a success. However, if you focus more on developing technology at the cost of developing your people, you may need to modify your behavior to bring it into line with the needs of your staff and ultimately with your beliefs. Adjusting your actions to better reflect your values and beliefs can create greater congruence, improve morale, and bring your team more fully on board.

The levels of this hierarchy are also referred to as *neurological levels* because they connect with your thinking processes and therefore the brain and its interaction with your body. These neurological levels operate in a hierarchy — like the rungs on a ladder — with identity at the penultimate rung and environment down below. When you can identify the real logical level at which you're working, the conflict becomes easier to resolve.

Here are some examples of the conflicts you may face at the different logical levels:

>> **Purpose:** You may feel a vague dissatisfaction, sensing there's more to life but being too caught up in work to pause and reflect. This can leave you living each day with an underlying sense of incompleteness.

>> **Identity:** You may juggle roles that pull you in different directions — good parent and committed employee, a likeable person as well as a profitable manager, a community volunteer and international jetsetter.

>> **Values and beliefs:** At times your values and beliefs clash. You may long for happiness yet doubt you deserve it or value both health and wealth but not believe you can achieve them together. You may value both family life and business success yet struggle to see how they fit together without role models who balance the two.

>> **Capabilities and skills:** You may have a mix of talents but struggle to use them in a way that truly satisfies you. Maybe you want a steady income yet also crave the joy of creating with your own hands. You may be a great musician and a qualified medic. You feel you have to choose where to focus your energy.

>> **Behavior:** You may sabotage yourself by engaging in behavior that doesn't seem to help you achieve your goals — tidying instead of working or reaching for buttered toast when you'd planned to diet.

>> **Environment:** You may feel torn between places or people — drawn to new horizons yet pulled back to familiar ones, wanting to be in two places at once.

As soon as you hear yourself or others say phrases such as "part of me wants . . . and yet another part of me wants . . .," you can be sure that an internal conflict is going on that defies logical reasoning.

You're in total harmony with yourself when each of your logical levels is aligned with the others. Personal conflict occurs when what you're trying to achieve or what you believe or what you're doing is out of kilter with other levels in the hierarchy. So if you want to satisfy the goal of earning a high salary, this aim may conflict with your identity of "I'm a good spouse and parent" because you don't get to spend time with your loved ones. Conflict resolution is achieved by brainstorming and asking questions of yourself and the people affected by your decisions regarding how you can come up with novel ways that may allow you to fulfill your goal and align your logical levels.

The examples used here show how inner dissonance can create stress at any or all logical levels, which are then reflected in your life. For your well-being, it's vital that you stop ignoring these feelings. They're subtle nudges from your unconscious mind — warnings that may well be a cry for help. The more you ignore them, the more stress you experience in life.

If you notice those familiar nudges — that tight feeling in your chest, the resistance to doing something, or the thought *I can't keep doing this* — don't brush them off. Consider talking it through with a coach or taking a course in personal development or stress training. Your unconscious isn't trying to sabotage you — it's trying to guide you.

Drifting from Wholeness to Parts

During the course of a conversation, have you ever heard yourself or someone else say, "Yes, part of me wants to do it, but part of me doesn't, and it feels like something is stopping me"? What's just been brought to your awareness are parts of your unconscious mind that are out of sync.

In NLP, these different aspects of the unconscious mind are called *parts*. Thinking of "parts" is a useful metaphor for the inner conflict that causes cognitive dissonance — that tug-of-war between what you consciously want, what you unconsciously believe, and what you actually do. Parts can be created by an event that has a high emotional content — a significant emotional event (Chapter 13 explains more about significant emotional events). The event can be something

negative such as an accident or a life-threatening occurrence. It can be something positive and life-affirming, such as holding a newborn child for the first time. A part can also be created when someone you fear or admire repeats a message, it can stick. For example, if your father often said, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be," you may avoid asking for help — financial or otherwise.

This part functions like a "mini you," with its own personality, values, and beliefs. Just like the "conscious you," this part exhibits behaviors that have purpose and intent. Unfortunately, the behaviors can be in conflict with the actual intention of the part. For example, a person who believes they were never loved as a child may develop shoplifting tendencies because the unconscious part craves attention, even though this kind of attention isn't what they really want.

Understanding a part's intentions

A major NLP presupposition is that *every behavior has a positive intent*, also known as secondary gain; for example, the positive intent behind someone smoking a cigarette may be to relax. (Head to Chapter 2 for more on the main NLP presuppositions and specifically on secondary gain.) Sometimes the behavior that your unconscious part makes you exhibit doesn't satisfy your underlying need.

Perhaps an alcoholic drinks to numb the pain (positive intent) they feel from having been abandoned by their spouse. The unconscious part is, in fact, crying out for love, but the manifested behavior — drinking heavily — doesn't satisfy the underlying need. The answer to this problem lies in identifying and understanding the real need and satisfying it in a positive way. So, if the alcoholic can come out of their stupor and recognize that it's not alcohol but love they need, they may dry out, clean up, learn lessons from their failed marriage and pick themselves up in order to find love.

Getting to the heart of the problem

Often a part of your unconscious mind can create problems for you. The reasons for these problems can be hard to understand logically. For example, you may suddenly develop a fear of an everyday activity such as traveling or meeting people. You can reach the real, hidden purpose behind the intention of the part by peeling back and exploring each reason or intention as it surfaces. When you arrive at the true, underlying purpose of the part, you can then assimilate this purpose into the bigger whole of your unconscious mind.

The following anecdote illustrates what can happen when your unconscious mind drives the motivation of one part. Later in this chapter, in the "Trying the visual squash technique" section, you discover how to integrate two parts that are in conflict.

Omar is a very successful business school graduate who had his career mapped out. He knew what he wanted to achieve and the time scales in which he would meet his goals. He was thrilled when he was promoted to his dream job as vice president of planning and strategy for a major global corporation. Just as he was about to embark on a tour of the European sites, disaster struck. Omar started experiencing heart palpitations, breathlessness, and cold sweats in the middle of the night. His doctor stated that nothing was physically wrong with him.

In talking through possible reasons for his condition with his NLP coach, Omar identified several issues connected with the promotion: he'd be away from home for longer periods; he'd be living in hotels; and he'd be spending less time playing football, something he was passionate about. Omar and his coach explored each of the layers of objections that were presented and discarded them as superficial reasons for his health issues.

During a state of deep relaxation, Omar recalled a memory of, in his words, "failing" at mathematics as a young boy. Omar's teacher and parents had very high expectations of him and he felt that he'd let them down when he didn't meet the stringent exam standards. Omar realized that, although the promotion gave him the opportunity to work at his ideal job, it was very high profile and his unconscious mind was trying to protect him from the humiliation of another failure. To do so, it was creating the physical problems that would ultimately get in the way of Omar succeeding at his dream job.

By working with his NLP coach, Omar realized that his parents and teacher had pushed him beyond his level of capability and set him up for failure. Omar recognized that he'd succeeded in his career on his own merits, and he had what it takes to be an outstanding success. He discovered that making mistakes and encountering failure was fine, as long as he was flexible enough to learn from the setbacks and use the lessons they provided to move forward.

While attempting to achieve what you want in your career or a project close to your heart, you may hit a brick wall. Find yourself a quiet space and some time to explore the ways in which you may be creating barriers to your own success.

Help! I'm in Conflict with Myself

Self-sabotage is one of the symptoms you can experience when different conscious and unconscious parts of you are in conflict, where every attempt you make to reach a goal is subverted by one of the parts. In this section, we detail two of the most common methods of self-sabotage you need to keep an eye out for.

Listening to your unconscious mind

As with any communication, if you understand that self-sabotage is just your unconscious mind's way of trying to communicate with you, you can assist it by examining the positive intention behind the behavior that's stopping you from achieving your goal. You can then substitute the self-defeating behavior with something more positive that still satisfies the intent of your unconscious mind. For example, someone who constantly overworks may consciously say they want more balance, but unconsciously, a part of them equates being busy with being valuable and worthy and having job security. Once they recognize that the drive to overwork is actually a need for validation or self-worth, they can begin to meet that need in healthier ways. But none of that can happen until they start to build self-esteem — and with it, a sense of personal agency and the belief that their needs and boundaries matter. From there, they can protect their energy and priorities by learning to set clear boundaries and to say no — politely but firmly. They can also reflect on the bigger picture by examining all areas of their life, both personal and professional. Chapter 4, along with the "Spinning the Wheel of Life" exercise, offers a practical way to start that process.

Taking sides

When two parts of your unconscious mind are in conflict, your conscious mind probably sides with one part or the other, making a judgment that one's bad and suppressing it by sheer force of will. The result is similar to what happens when you squeeze a balloon. If the balloon isn't blown up to capacity, as you squeeze one end the air pushes the balloon out in another direction. If the balloon is filled to capacity, you just get a bang as you squeeze. Similarly, as you suppress a part of you, the suppressed part shows up as an aberrant behavior, physical symptom (balloon distortion), or a breakdown (the bang).

ANECDOTE Fiona suffered so badly from eczema that she kept her body well covered. In therapy, she came to realize that the symptoms were a consequence of having been bullied at school, where all she ever wanted to do was hide. Now her unconscious mind, in its own unique way, was presenting her with a means to hide.

In Fiona's case the part that wanted to hide her from the bullies created a physical symptom, which meant she had to keep her body covered. After the therapy brought conscious awareness, previously failed medical treatments worked well. However, the eczema does flare up when Fiona is under stress, so she's developed strategies (see Chapter 12 for more on strategies) for managing her time and energy better.

Becoming Whole: Integrating Your Parts

Not all parts of the unconscious mind are in conflict with each other. You become aware of those that are in conflict, however, when you encounter problems such as wanting to be healthy but avoid exercise or wanting to be slim but not being able to control what you eat. You can deal with these conflicting parts as and when they surface.

More unconscious parts mean more potential for conflict; the ideal is thus to aspire to greater wholeness. For example, when more than two parts are involved, you can integrate them in pairs. In this section, we describe two of the more common techniques for integrating conflicting parts: the *visual squash* and *reframing*.

Trying the visual squash technique

In principle, this exercise involves identifying the parts involved in a conflict and discovering their common intention before integrating them.

TIP

As you work to integrate your parts, keep these tips in mind:

>> Strive to turn a negative answer into a positive outcome. For example, if you want to do more exercise and you get the negative answer, "I don't want to spend too much time exercising," carry on toward a positive outcome such as "I want exercise to fit in with my lifestyle."

>> Work with a qualified NLP practitioner or partner who can record your answers and prompt you with them.

ANECDOTE

Sue wanted to overcome her resistance to exercising. She did the following process with her friend, Gillian. The part that Sue placed on her right hand was a young child who was carefree, spontaneous, and very playful. Some of the things important to the child were freedom, playfulness, joy, and laughter, with fun being the most important. The part of Sue's unconscious that she placed on her left hand was a rather dark, dour, elderly male whose prime concern was safety. During the exercise, Sue had no trouble working with the child's hierarchy of intentions (see point 7 in the following exercise). However, when she came to work with the male part of her unconscious, Sue kept forgetting what she'd said for the earlier step and found it very helpful to have Gillian repeat her exact words to her. Because Sue didn't feel an affinity with the male part of her unconscious, she resisted "his" responses and found having Gillian to hand very helpful.

The result of doing this exercise was that Sue realized that a part of her unconscious mind was nervous that if she exercised and became really healthy, she'd stop treating her body with care. As soon as Sue became aware, consciously, of the purpose of each part, both parts discovered that their highest purpose was success.

For this exercise to be successful you have to find out what the common intention is for each part before you try to integrate them. A useful idea is to talk to the parts and have them acknowledge that each part has a positive intention for the other and that their conflict is stopping both parts from achieving their common purpose.

Remember that your memories are only a construction of your mind. If, in the past, you chose to make a decision — such as "exercise is tiring" — your whole timeline is based on that decision. If you then resolve this issue by integrating it with a decision you make to be healthy, you can change your timeline to accommodate the new, healthy you.

1. **Identify two conflicting parts.**

   For example, part of you wants to be healthy, while another part resists exercise.

2. **Find a quiet place.**

   Choose somewhere you won't be disturbed.

3. **Invite the first part onto one hand.**

   This is usually the "problem part" — for instance, the part that avoids exercise.

4. **Visualize the part.**

   Imagine it as a person or symbol. Notice what it looks like, how it sounds, and how it feels. Remember to thank it for showing up.

5. **Invite the second part onto your other hand.**

   In this example, the second part is the part of you that wants to be healthy.

6. **Visualize this part.**

   Imagine it as a person or symbol. Notice what it looks like, how it sounds, and how it feels. Remember to thank this part for showing up, too.

7. **Explore positive intentions of the first part.**

   Ask the part, "What is your positive intention or purpose?"

8. **Build a hierarchy of intentions.**

   Keep asking until the answers start to loop back or repeat. This shows you've reached a deeper purpose.

9. **Explore positive intentions of the second part.**

Ask the part, "What is your positive intention or purpose?"

10. **Keep asking until the answers start to loop back or repeat. This shows you've reached a deeper purpose.**

The part averse to exercise might say *I get tired → I want to conserve energy → That way I avoid injury and stay secure → I am safe*.

The part that wants to be healthy might say *I like the rush of endorphins I get → I have more energy → With more energy I can stay active and strong → When I am strong, I can handle challenges more easily → When I handle challenges, I know I can look after myself → I am safe*.

Even though the routes differ, both parts converge on the same deeper intention.

11. **Exchange resources.**

Ask each part what resources it has that the other part would find useful in attaining the common, positive purpose of each part.

- The part averse to exercise may say *I have the imagination to design better solutions* or *I understand the challenges people face*.

- The healthy part may say *I bring energy for change* or *I have the discipline to achieve goals*.

12. **Integrate the parts.**

Bring your hands together, merging the parts into a new, whole you. Notice what this integrated version of you looks like, sounds like, and feels like.

13. **Update your timeline.**

Using the techniques that we present in Chapter 13, go back to before your conception and travel along your timeline to now, with the new, integrated you, changing your history as you travel.

REMEMBER

Memories are only a construction of your mind. A past decision such as "exercise is tiring" can shape your whole timeline. When you resolve this issue by integrating it with a decision you make to be healthy, you can change your timeline to accommodate the new, healthy you.

Reframing — As if

The meaning of an interaction is dependent on the context in which it takes place. So, by changing the context of — or *reframing* — an experience, you can change its meaning. For example, if someone criticizes you for being too subjective, you can thank the person because that may be the very quality that makes you

creative, great with people, easy to trust, and able to motivate, resolve conflict, and build strong relationships. The *as if* reframing is excellent for resolving conflict because it allows you to pretend and therefore explore possibilities that you wouldn't have thought of otherwise. Acting *as if* you have the resources now helps to shift any beliefs that may be holding you back.

When you're in conflict, with yourself or another party, use the following "as if" frames to help you resolve the problem:

» **Time switch:** Step six months or a year into the future, look back to now, and ask yourself what you did to overcome the problem. This will help you discover resources that you may not have known you could access.

ANECDOTE

Alan was in a well-paid job in which he was relatively happy. However, his boss had favorites in the department, and Alan was getting sidelined. Alan had wanted to work for a large multinational for some time but didn't believe that his skills were good enough. He used the well-formed outcomes process (which we describe in Chapter 4) to design his dream job. He then tried the time switch by stepping five years into the future and pretending he had his perfect job. He realized he needed to work for one of his company's competitors, and six months later, he found himself in his dream job, working for the multinational of his choice.

» **Person switch:** Pretend that you're someone you respect and ask yourself what you'd do if you were able to swap bodies with the other person for a day.

ANECDOTE

Georgina admired Emma Watson (the actor who portrays Hermione Granger in the *Harry Potter* films). Georgina pretended to swap bodies with Watson. She discovered that, although her job in IT paid the mortgage, it failed to satisfy her on a deep level. As Emma Watson, Georgina discovered that she really wanted to work in films, bringing stories from people's imaginations to life. Georgina realized that life in the film world can be risky but took the first step by enrolling for a part-time course in scriptwriting.

» **Information switch:** Suppose that you have all the information you need to find a solution: What would that knowledge be and how would your circumstances change?

ANECDOTE

Georgina used the information switch to break down what she'd have to do to live her dream of becoming a scriptwriter. Consequently, she took evening classes in scriptwriting and began working on film projects with students at a local college at the weekends. She is now at the stage where she's planning to work part-time for production companies so that she can spend more time following her dream.

» **Function switch:** Imagine that you can change any component in the system within which you're experiencing a restriction; for example, you aren't progressing at work or your marriage is a little rocky. What would you change and how would this change affect the outcome?

Colin worked as a nurse in a busy veterinary practice; he loved his job but felt as though something was missing in his life. He sat down and used his imagination to see what element he would change. As a result, Colin's unconscious mind had him recognize that he wanted to do good where he was really needed by animals and by people unable to afford expensive veterinary treatment. Colin now works at an animal sanctuary in India, still loves what he's doing, and feels completely fulfilled.

Resolving Bigger Conflicts

The previous sections in this chapter provide you with a pretty good understanding of *intrapersonal* conflicts (within a person) and how to begin resolving them. You may also like to think about extrapolating and extending this model. You can apply the approaches used in resolving intrapersonal conflict to relationships and negotiations between two people, within a team, family or social group, and between different companies and organizations. Here are some examples of these bigger conflicts:

» **Interpersonal conflict:** Where two or more people have differing needs that can't be satisfied at the same time.

» **Intragroup conflict:** Between two or more people within the group, for example members of a team or department.

» **Intergroup conflict:** Between two or more groups of people, as in gang warfare or companies battling for market leadership.

In all these situations, you can use the process outlined in the following exercise to negotiate a successful outcome.

This exercise is based on the NLP process for integrating conflicting parts that we describe in the "Trying the visual squash technique" and "Reframing — as if" sections earlier in this chapter:

1. Imagine that you're the negotiator trying to resolve a conflict between different parties.

2. **Ask each party, "What's your positive intention?"**

   Keep asking both sides until you uncover some core and fundamental needs on which both parties can agree. (Refer to the earlier section, "Trying the visual squash technique.")

3. **Ask each party to acknowledge the common ground and hold on to it.**

4. **Using the "as if" frame, explore alternative solutions to the problem. (Refer to the earlier section, "Reframing — as if.")**

5. **Decide on the resources each party can bring to the table to help resolve the conflict.**

6. **Always keep the common aim in mind and strive for a win–win outcome.**

To paraphrase Einstein, having imagination is more important than having knowledge because knowledge boxes you into the realm of the known, whereas imagination allows you to discover and create new solutions. So use your imagination to come up with novel solutions to conflicts.

4

Using Words to Captivate

Discover the power of language as used by the world's best communicators.

Vary your language to create the results you want.

Find out how to tell stories to good effect or send an audience into a trance.

Learn to ask powerful questions that go straight to the heart of an issue without prejudicing the result for the person you're speaking to.

Chapter **15**

Getting to the Heart of the Matter: The Meta Model

Have you ever invited someone, even yourself, to "Say what you mean and mean what you say"? If only speech was that easy.

You use words all the time as important tools to convey your thoughts and ideas — to explain and share your experiences with others. In Chapter 6, we explain that, in any face-to-face communication, people take just part of the meaning from the words that come out of your mouth. Your body language — all those movements and gestures — and the tone of your voice transmit the rest.

An important NLP presupposition is that "the map is not the territory" (see Chapter 2 for more on presuppositions). This statement explains that the model you hold in your head of the world around you isn't the actual world, but just the current representation you make of it. The filters of your experience and your language influence this representation of the world, just as your dynamic brain is shaped by experience and no two brains have identical neural pathways.

Words offer just a model, a symbol of your experience; they can never fully describe the whole picture. Think of an iceberg — the tip above the surface is like the words you say. NLP says that this tip is the *surface structure* of language. Beneath the surface lies the rest of the iceberg — the home of your whole experience — which NLP calls the *deep structure*; that is, the way you represent the world internally, in your mind.

This chapter takes you from the surface structure and leads you into the deep structure so that you can get beyond the vague words of everyday speech to be more specific about what you mean. You meet the incredibly useful Meta Model, one of NLP's most important revelations, which clarifies the meaning of what people say. Remember that people never give a complete description of the entire thought process that lies beneath their words; if they did, they'd never finish speaking. The Meta Model is a tool that allows you to get closer access to people's experiences, which they code through speech.

IT'S BEEN A HARD DAY'S WORK

Supper table talk in Kate's family often goes as follows, "So, has it been a hard day's work today?" In recounting the highlights of the day, the conversation invariably centers on what constitutes a hard day's work. Does a 12-hour-long stint in a warm, comfortable environment surrounded by the latest labor-saving technology and coffee-making devices qualify?

The question stemmed from watching a TV documentary about motorway maintenance workers who shift traffic cones in the dead of night. The family agreed that this really was hard work in comparison with the reality of a hard day for them, as well as most of their friends and colleagues.

What's a hard day for you? In just one sentence, you can conjure up a wealth of different meanings. The qualities of the work experience when you're running a home or an office are very different to the physical reality of, say, a fire-fighter tackling blazes or a builder constructing houses relentlessly exposed to the elements.

A statement such as "a hard day's work" can be interpreted in numerous different ways. To get to any one speaker's precise meaning requires access to more information — the facts that have been left out. As you read this chapter, you can discover how to gain easy access to relevant information to stop you jumping to the wrong assumptions about somebody else's experience.

Gathering Specific Information with the Meta Model

Richard Bandler and John Grinder, the co-creators of NLP, discovered that when people speak, three key processes happen naturally, which they labeled *deletion*, *generalization*, and *distortion*. These processes enable people to explain their experiences in words without going into long-winded details and boring everyone to death.

These processes happen all the time in normal everyday encounters. People *delete* information by not giving the whole story, make *generalizations* by extrapolating from one experience to another, and *distort* reality by letting their imaginations run wild.

Figure 15-1 illustrates the NLP model of how you experience the real world through your senses — visual (pictures), auditory (sounds), kinesthetic (touch and feelings), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). You filter or check your perception of reality against what you already know through the processes of deletion, generalization, and distortion (more about these filters in Chapter 8). In this way, you create your personal map or mental model of the real world.
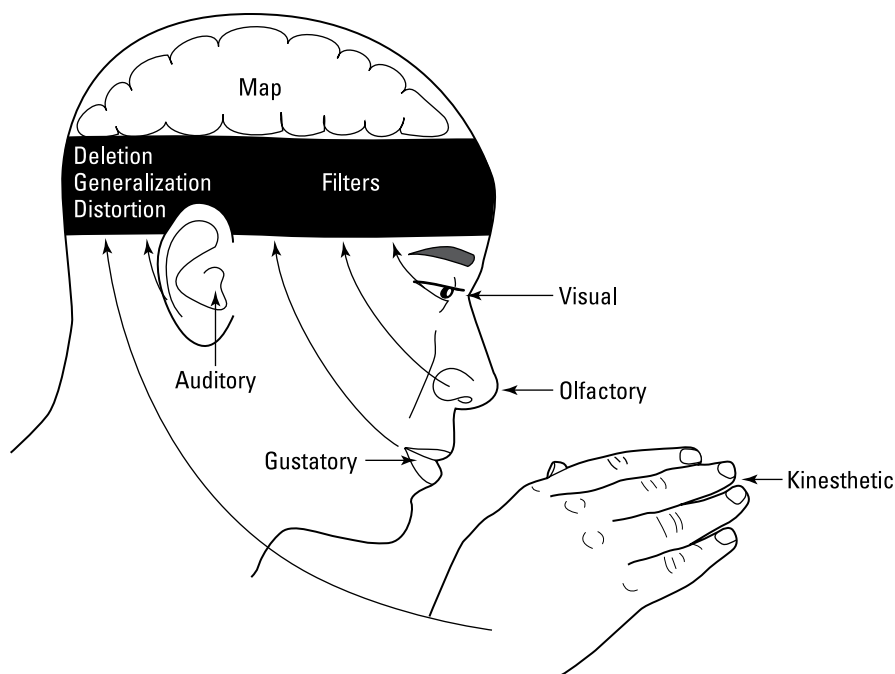
FIGURE 15-1: The NLP model of experiencing the world around you.

By watching and analyzing two different, highly experienced therapists at work talking to their clients, Bandler and Grinder came up with the NLP Meta Model as a way to explain the link between language and experience.

Bandler and Grinder were interested in finding the rules that determine how humans use language to help others develop similar skills. They were influenced by their own work in the field of linguistics, especially on *transformational grammar* (which seeks to explain the relationship between the deep structure of experience and the surface structure of language), and set out ideas on how people describe their experiences in language. They were also strongly influenced by modeling two exceptional therapists with outstanding communication skills — Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls — and they published the results in *The Structure of Magic* (Science and Behavior Books, 1975).

Although the early work came from the field of psychotherapy — because they wanted to enrich the skills of "people helpers" — the models shed light equally well for nonprofessionals in ordinary situations, where they're simply talking with friends, family, and colleagues.

The Meta Model offers a series of questions that enable you to overcome people's deletions, generalizations, and distortions. You'll probably recognize some of the questions because they're the ones you naturally ask when you want to clarify meaning. But perhaps you haven't thought about them consciously before. Asked in a gentle way and with rapport, these questions let you gather more information to define a clearer picture of what's really meant. By working with this model you can reconnect with the experiences that get lost in language.

Table 15-1 summarizes some of the different ways in which you can delete, generalize, and distort an experience through the language you adopt. Don't worry about the names of the NLP patterns just yet; the important part is that you begin to tune your ears into what people say. As you discover how to spot the main Meta Model patterns that you prefer, and that others favor too, you're in a great position to respond appropriately. We also offer in Table 15-1 some suggestions of what to say when you respond, in order to gather the missing information that helps you to be sure of understanding what the other person really means.

Deletion — You're so vague

When you're listening, you naturally ignore many extra sounds, saving you the effort of processing every single word. When you speak, you economize on all the details that you could share. This practice is called *deletion* because details have been removed. Figure 15-2 shows several examples.

TABLE 15-1   Meta Model Patterns

NLP Meta Model Patterns	Examples of Patterns You May Hear	Questions to Help Gather Information or Expand the Other Person's Viewpoint
Deletion		
Simple deletion	I've been out.	Where specifically have you been?
	Help!	What do you want help with?
Unspecified verbs	She annoyed me.	How specifically did she annoy you?
Comparisons	She's better than I am.	Better at what than you?
Judgments	You're wrong.	Who says so and what are the facts?
Nominalizations	Our *relationship* isn't working.	How do we not relate to each other?
	Change is easy.	Changing what is easy?
Generalization		
Modal operators of possibility	I *can't* . . . it's not possible.	What stops you? Is that true?
Modal operators of necessity	We *have to* do this. We *should* (or *ought to*).	What would happen if we didn't? Who says we should?
Universal quantifiers	He *never* thinks about my feelings.	Never, ever?
	We *always* do it this way.	Every single time? What would happen if we did it differently?
Distortion		
Complex equivalence	With a name like that, he must be popular.	How does having this name mean that he's popular?
Mind reading	You're going to love this.	How do you know that? Who says?
Cause and effect	His voice makes me angry.	How does his voice make you angry?
	I made her feel awful.	How exactly did you do that?

FIGURE 15-2:
The language
of deletion.

"You were good."

"Just do it!"

"I don't know."

"This is important."

"I'm scared."
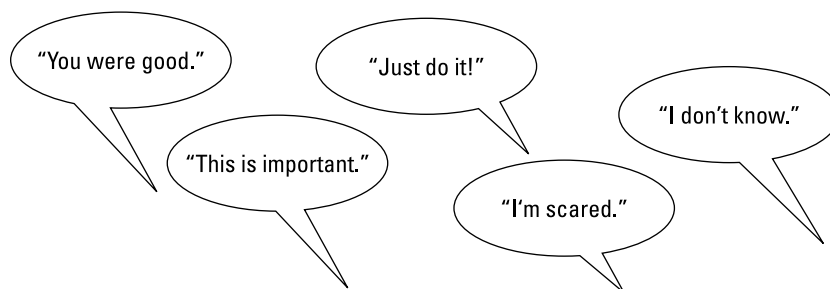
Your central nervous system is being fed millions of pieces of information every second. If you needed to evaluate every bit of this information on a conscious level, imagine the time and energy you'd need!

To help you operate at peak efficiency, deletion delivers a valuable critical screening mechanism. Deletion is selective attention. Deletions in your language encourage you to fill in the gaps — to imagine information to complete what's missing. If someone says to you "I bought a new car," you then begin to guess more information. If that person doesn't tell you what type of car, you then create your own ideas about the make, color, fuel usage, and age based on what you've already decided about its use and the person's preferences. So if you think that the person is a lively, fun-loving character, you may decide that they bought a sports car. If you think they're safe and cautious, you may decide that they bought a practical hybrid car and steered away from all electric in case of lack of charging facilities.

The downside of deletion is that it can restrict and limit your thinking and understanding. You can develop the habit of deleting certain information and signals from others, for example. Compliments and criticism are the classic example. Some people are experts at deleting compliments they receive and noticing only the criticism. So, too, they ignore success and notice only failure. If this habit rings a bell with you, set about breaking it now.

In a coaching session, Meera confessed to her coach, "I'm extremely lazy." This statement intrigued her coach, who'd heard about Meera's exhausting workload as a partner in a law firm. Her coach asked her to keep a journal for a whole week noting specific examples of her laziness. At the end of the week, when they evaluated the journal together, Meera spotted that the expectations she placed on herself were sky high and leading to almost certain burnout. What she saw as "laziness" was, in fact, the essential recovery time that she gave herself. She needed to reframe her limited perception to recognize the value of recovery, just as a high-performing athlete needs time away from the practice field or arena to boost energy.

Politicians are known for speaking in generalizations to win voters' support. They bravely promise to reduce taxes, increase public spending, and solve long-standing issues. The specific details of their plans are missing. To gather deleted information when being canvassed for your vote, you can ask these useful questions:

>> Who? What? When? Where? How?

>> What precisely?

>> What exactly?

ABSTRACT NOUNS AND THE WHEELBARROW TEST

The Meta Model is very useful in the way that it helps you clarify vague statements. If you say to someone, "Love is so painful," that person needs more information to understand what's going on in your life.

Abstract nouns — such as love, trust, honesty, relationship, change, fear, pain, obligation, responsibility, impression — are particularly difficult to respond to. NLP calls these words *nominalizations* — where a verb (for example, to love) has turned into a noun (love), which is hard to define in a way that everyone agrees on. In order to extract more meaning from your statement, another person needs to turn the noun back into a verb to help get more information and then reply. Therefore, that person's response to the statement "Love is painful" may be "How specifically is the way you love someone so painful?"

Imagine a wheelbarrow. If you think of a noun and can picture it inside the wheelbarrow, it's a concrete noun — a person, a flowerpot, an apple, a desk are all concrete examples. Nominalizations are the nouns that don't pass the wheelbarrow test. You can't put love, fear, a relationship, or pain in your wheelbarrow! Instead, when you rephrase these words as verbs, you put the action and responsibility back into the language. This helps people who speak in nominalizations to connect with their own experience and find more options, rather than distancing themselves from it.

Notice that "why?" doesn't figure in this list of questions. That's because "why?" forces people to question their personal judgment and purpose rather than recover lost information.

Generalization — Beware of always, must, and should

Consider young children getting on a two-wheeled bike for the first time. They pay tremendous attention to keeping their balance and managing the steering. Perhaps they need training wheels or a balance bike until they master the skill. Yet, some weeks or months later, they're competent and don't have to relearn each time they cycle away — because they generalize from one experience to the next.

Your ability to generalize from past experiences is an important skill that saves huge amounts of time and energy in learning about the world. These generalized experiences are represented by words. Think of the word *chair*. You know what

one's like; you've sat on many and seen different types. As a child, you discover that the word represents a particular chair. Then you make a generalization, and the next time you see a chair, you're able to name it. Now, whenever you see a chair, you understand its function.

Although vitally important to communication, the skill of generalization can also limit your experience of options and differences in certain contexts. Under stress, it's easy to generalize. Notice that if you have a bad experience in the past, you may expect it to happen time and time again. A man who experiences a string of unhappy romantic encounters may conclude that "all women are a pain" and decide that he's "never" going to meet a woman with whom he can live happily. The child who has experienced an unkind comment from a stressed and impatient teacher can assume that teachers are always mean and scary.

ANECDOTE Romilla and Kate were traveling one afternoon when Romilla ably demonstrated her natural ability to generalize and said, "Have you noticed how *everyone's* driving my car?" Surprised, Kate asked how that was possible. Romilla pointed out that she'd seen 15 new Minis in the last ten minutes. She'd fallen in love with this car and was deciding whether to buy one. All she was able to see were the possible color combinations of this new car. Kate hadn't noticed a single one of them — she wasn't interested in a new car at all but was simply concentrating on getting through the traffic and out of London.

You can hear all sorts of generalizations about particular cultures or groups:

>> Americans talk loudly.

>> British drink tea.

>> Italians are wild drivers.

>> Politicians can't be trusted.

>> Scots are prudent with money.

>> Unmarried mothers are a drain on society.

Such rigid, black-and-white thinking, which allows for no gray in between, creates unhelpful generalizations about other people and situations and is the breeding ground for discontent, prejudice, and political bias. Stop and listen to what you say. When you hear the verbal clues about generalizations in words like *all*, *never*, *every*, *always* (Figure 15-3 shows several examples of everyday generalizations), challenge yourself. Is *everyone* like that? Do *all* clients do that? Must we *always* do it this way?
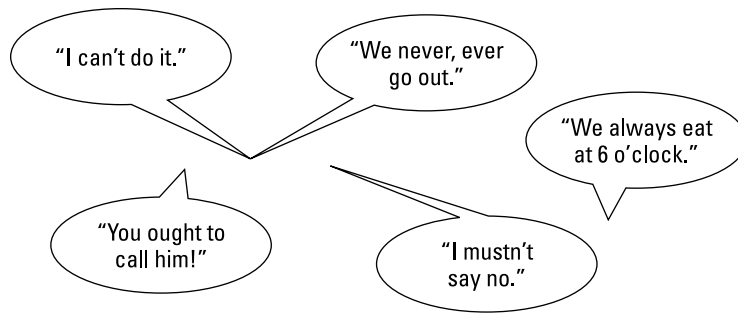
When you hear someone (or yourself!) generalizing, ask the following useful questions. They make you stop and think about whether you're limiting your options unnecessarily and encourage you to take a broader perspective:

» Always? Never? Every?

» Just imagine you could, what then?

» So what happens if you do . . .?

» What stops you?

ANECDOTE

Charlie was moaning to Kate that she was struggling to lose weight in spite of having a good basic diet and not liking sweet food. When Kate asked her friend what she actually ate, Charlie's response was, "Well, I always eat porridge, I've had the same breakfast for 20 years; then I always have a baked potato with cheese or beans at lunchtime; and for supper I always have soup and bread. I never eat after seven in the evening." Having heard the generalizations in her language, Kate asked what would happen if she tried some different foods, and Charlie went off to investigate fresh meal options. A month later, Charlie had lost about seven pounds and had had fun exploring food aisles in the local supermarket.

TRY THIS

To begin to explore your own thinking on what's possible and impossible, here's an easy exercise to do in just ten minutes. Beware — it may change your life forever!

1. **Look at the following phrases and jot down some of the statements you've made in the last week (to yourself as well as to others) that start with these words:**

I always

I must

I should

I never

I ought to

I have to

2. **Now stop.**

3. **Go back to your list and for each statement ask yourself three questions:**

What would happen if I didn't?

When did I decide this?

Is this statement true and helpful for me now?

4. **Review your list in the light of the questions you asked.**

5. **Create a revised list for yourself that replaces the words *always*, *must*, *should*, *never*, *ought to*, and *have to* with the words *I choose to*.**

By completing this exercise you're examining some of the types of generalizations that you make (which NLP calls *modal operators* — as in *should*, *ought to*, and *have to* — and *universal quantifiers* — as in *always* and *never*; see Table 15-1). Then, in step 3, you ask the Meta Model questions to explore options for yourself. By revising the statements in step 5, you put yourself back in control of your own decisions and behavior.

Distortion — That touch of imagination

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Benjamin Disraeli was right when he said, "Imagination governs the world." Distortion, the process by which you change the meaning of an experience when it comes up against your own map of reality, is one such example. Figure 15-4 shows some everyday examples of distortion.
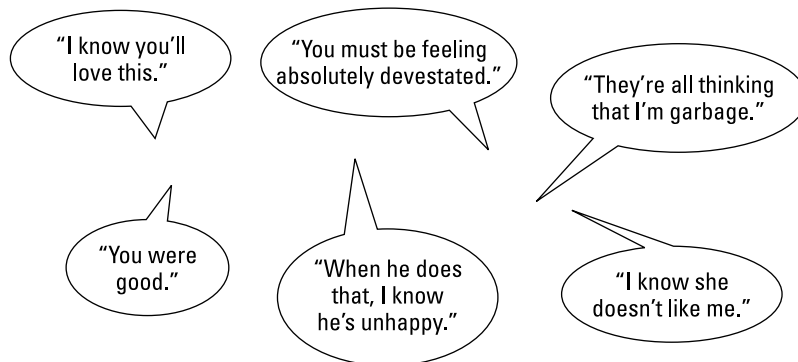
FIGURE 15-4: The language of distortion.

Distortion supports your ability to explore your own inner world, your dreams, and lets your imagination run wild. That's fine when you want to explore your creativity.

The problem with distortion, however, is that most people don't realize that the distortion doesn't necessarily represent the truth; instead, it just represents their own perception. For example, have you ever come out of a meeting with a group of people and all had a different understanding of what happened? Or been to the movies with friends and come away with a completely different view of the film's message to everyone else? Distortion happens when you take one aspect of an experience and change it according to what's happening for you in your life at that time.

Another example of distortion is attempting to read other people's minds. You can never know what other people are truly thinking, even though they may provide interesting clues. When negative distortion is combined with generalization the result can be quite debilitating. For example, a child comes home from school and says, "Everyone stares at me every time I walk into the classroom, and they all think I'm stupid."

REMEMBER Beware of making judgments about what other people think until you gather specific information and review the facts.

TIP Here are some useful questions to ask when you want to check for distorted meanings:

>> How do you know?

>> How exactly does X lead to Y?

>> Who says?

Using the Meta Model

The Meta Model questions are powerful verbal tools in business, coaching, education, therapy, and life. They let you use language to gain clarity and get closer to somebody's experience. You can adopt the Meta Model when you want to do the following:

>> **Clarify another person's meaning:** When you need to be completely sure what the other person has in mind. Are you both on the same wavelength or making assumptions that you don't really understand?

- » **Get more information:** When you need to understand, for example, the objectives and scope of a new project.

- » **Open up more options:** When you need to explore different ways of doing things for yourself and for others.

- » **Spot your own and other people's limitations:** When you need to work through beliefs and unhelpful habitual behavior.

Taking two simple steps

TIP

When you use the Meta Model, challenge distortions first, then generalizations next, and then deletions. If you begin with deletions, you may get more information than you can handle.

To use the Meta Model, follow these simple steps:

1. **Listen to the words and spot the pattern (distortion, generalization, or deletion).**

   Refer to the "Gathering Specific Information with the Meta Model" section earlier in this chapter for an explanation of the language clues that help you recognize which pattern is being used.

2. **Intervene with the right question.**

   - For distortion, ask

     How do you know?

     What's the evidence?

   - For generalization, ask

     Is that always the case? Every time? Never?

     What if. . .?

   - For deletion, ask

     Can you tell me more?

     What, when, where, who, how?

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Deletions and distortions can have a dangerous effect on commercial decisions. As a business coach, Kate has often worked in family businesses where such filtered thinking can lead to delusion on the part of the business owner and also the non-family staff.

Like it or not, people often place misguided trust in their own family members, giving them roles for which they're not really suited. They just hope things will work out so that control of the business remains with the family. Or maybe the parent hopes that the son or daughter will keep the family name alive as well as live out their own unfulfilled dreams. Kate has actually encountered the key role of finance director entrusted to a family member with inadequate accounting skills; learning by trial and error unfortunately limited the success of the business.

In contrast, sometimes extremely competent family members are dismissed as the boss's son/daughter/nephew. Other employees may fail to acknowledge that, in many cases, these people have actually been hired because they're ideal for the job and delete information about their best qualities. Employees don't trust them for fear they'll gossip with the rest of the family.

Amanda is a director in a very successful and long-established family firm. She says, "I was always keen to work in the family business, but my dad and uncle (as well as grand-dad before them) refused to employ any of their children until we'd proved our business skills elsewhere. So I had to cut my teeth in pharmaceutical sales elsewhere. My cousins and I all took a pay cut to join the family firm and only began to reap the rewards several years later when we finally managed above-average performance. Then we won the respect of the rest of the staff who could see we were truly committed and contributing to the company. It was a good plan by the older generation to make sure the family business was viable longer term and that we arrived with extra experience. And when times get tough, as a family business we operate from a position of caring deeply about each other."

Remembering a few caveats

You can ask questions in two basic ways: one is considerate and valuable and the other sounds more like an interrogation by the Spanish Inquisition. So here are some important points to bear in mind (you don't want to have a falling out with your best friend!):

REMEMBER

>> Bear in mind that rapport always comes first. Without rapport, nobody listens to you. For information on building rapport, head to Chapter 6.

>> Remember that people need to trust you before they're ready to open up on difficult issues. So pace them before surprising them with a challenging question. You can find more information on pacing and leading people in Chapter 6.

>> Make sure that you're clear about what you're trying to achieve — your outcome — while you ask questions; otherwise, you can become overloaded with irrelevant information and cease to be helpful.

>> Soften your voice and be sensitive in your questioning. Feed the questions gently into conversations and meetings rather than firing them like a market researcher in the street.

>> Try the Meta Model on yourself before you rush off to sort out your family and friends uninvited. Go steady. Like Tom in the following example, others may wonder what's happening and not thank you for your new-found interest.

ANECDOTE

After a busy week of work, Andrew winds down on Friday nights with a beer at his favorite pub in the picturesque town where he lives. After taking an NLP training course, he was enthusiastic to try out the Meta Model. His drinking partner, Tom, an architect, talked about the week he'd had, and especially about a major argument with a colleague over an important project.

As Tom began his tale with, "I'll never work with him again," Andrew questioned the generalization with, "What never? Are you sure? What would happen if you did?" Tom looked puzzled and responded with, "Our partnership isn't going to work; communication has just broken down."

Delighted to spot not one but two nominalizations in one sentence (check out the earlier sidebar "Abstract nouns and the wheelbarrow test" for a description of nominalizations), Andrew jumped in with, "How would you like to be a partner with this guy? And how may you be able to communicate?" Tom was aghast and responded, "Look, you're normally on my side. What's going on?"

In his keenness to try out NLP, Andrew forgot to match and pace his friend and ease in gently with some subtle use of the Meta Model. All Tom really wanted that night was to have a good moan to a friend who would listen and sympathize.

REMEMBER

The value of the Meta Model lies in gaining clarity. Be aware of the danger of getting more information than you can handle. Instead, pause to consider the outcome you're seeking before asking the next question.

Chapter **16**

Unleashing the Power of Hypnosis

I magine scenario one. You're driving along the road on an ordinary kind of day. This stretch of road is familiar; you've traveled it dozens of times, you know where you're going. You reach your destination, stop the car, and notice that you have no clear recollection of traveling the last few miles.

Now imagine scenario two. You're working from home on a call with a group of people; perhaps you're attending a briefing or training of some kind. You wake with a start when someone asks, "What are your thoughts on this?" Oh dear. Your attention has wandered. You haven't a clue what the discussion is all about.

So what's happening in these two scenarios? Nothing extraordinary. You're simply experiencing an everyday trance, as if your brain is operating like an electronic device in sleep mode. You're daydreaming, which is an excellent example of your ability to delete the details of what's happening around you and sink into the relaxation pattern of the trance. Scenes like these happen the world over, every moment of the day.

In this chapter, we dip our toes into the world of trance and talk about how to turn it to your (and other people's) benefit. Specifically, we look at the language patterns you can choose to adopt to communicate more effectively with other people by getting through to the unconscious part of their minds.

Discovering the Language of Trance: The Milton Model

Humans have an amazing capacity to make sense of what people say — even when it's utter gobbledygook. Sometimes, being artfully vague is valuable — when you're nonspecific in the content of what you say, you enable other people to fill the gaps for themselves. When your language construction is deliberately vague, people can take what they need from your words in a way that's most appropriate for them. It can keep people from worrying about specific issues and enables them to access the creative powers of the brain, which we cover in Chapter 3.

The *Milton Model* is a set of language patterns that you can use to take somebody into a trance state, an altered state of consciousness, in which they can access unconscious resources, make changes, and solve their own problems. The Milton Model is named after Milton H. Erickson, one of the most influential of all hypnotherapists (read more about him in the earlier sidebar "Milton H. Erickson: the master at work").

The Milton Model uses all the same patterns as the Meta Model — but in reverse (head to Chapter 15 for details on the Meta Model). Whereas the Meta Model aims to gather more information, the Milton Model aims to reduce the detail, deliberately adopting vague language that can be acceptable to different people. Table 16-1 outlines the main differences between these two models.

TABLE 16-1   **Milton Model versus Meta Model**

Milton Model	Meta Model
Makes language more general	Makes language more specific
Moves from surface structure to deep structure	Moves from deep structure to surface structure
Looks for general understanding	Looks for precise examples
Aims to access unconscious resources	Aims to bring experience to conscious awareness
Keeps client internally focused	Keeps client externally focused

Comparing language patterns and the Milton Model

In Table 16-2, we highlight some of the key language patterns of the Milton Model. Just as in the Meta Model — Bandler and Grinder's earlier explanation of language — the Milton Model identifies three key types of pattern. You see the same deletions, generalizations, and distortions that happen in normal speech (which we explain in full in Chapter 15) — the ways in which people make sense of their everyday experiences and transform them into language.

As the comparison of the two models in Table 16-1 shows, the Milton Model makes statements that are deliberately very general; the effect of this approach is to relax the person you're speaking to. In contrast, the Meta Model essentially invites the other person to retrieve specific details that are missing.

TABLE 16-2 **NLP Milton Model Patterns**

Patterns	Examples of the Vague Language You Can Use to Challenge Deletions, Generalizations, and Distortions and Take a Person into a Receptive State
Deletion	
Simple deletion (misses out part of the message)	You're ready to listen.
Unspecified verbs (don't say how the action is carried out)	As you make sense of this in your own time . . .
Unspecified referential index (doesn't say who is being referred to)	Some people will have been important to you.
Comparisons (miss out what is being compared)	You're feeling more and more curious.
Nominalizations (an abstract noun that is turned into a verb, see Chapter 15)	You're gaining new insights, building new friendships.
Generalization	
Modal operators of possibility (show what you can and are able to do)	You can become more successful. You're able to discover new ways . . .
Modal operators of necessity (state what you must, you have to do)	You must take this forward to where it has to go.
Universal quantifiers (all, everything)	Every time you feel like this . . . All the skills you need are easy for you to learn.
Distortion	
Complex equivalence (one situation means the same as another)	This means that you're getting all the help you need.
Mind reading (interpreting another's thoughts)	I know that you're becoming more interested.
Cause and effect	On each breath, you can relax even more.

Meeting other aspects of the Milton Model

As well as the language patterns described in the preceding section, Erickson also used a number of other linguistic devices to assist in communication with his clients. We discuss three such devices in the following three sections.

Tag questions

A tag question is added to the end of a statement to invite agreement. Tag questions are a deliberate and very effective device that distracts the conscious mind of the recipient with something they can agree with. The effect is that the statement in front of the tag question goes directly to the unconscious mind and is acted upon:

>> This is easy, isn't it?

>> Your health is important, you know?

>> You can, can't you?

>> It's time to relax, don't you know?

TIP

Even if you never read or discover anything more about hypnosis, remember one of the most powerful phrases in the English language that is also an example of a tag question: *that's right.* Don't take our word for it, just try it out; you'll find that it's virtually impossible for someone to disagree with you.

Embedded commands

Embedded commands or questions are sentences that are constructed so as to contain within them the outcome that Erickson wanted from the client, as with the italicized parts of the following sentences:

>> I'm curious about whether *you will learn to relax and let yourself be comfortable* in a few moments.

>> What is interesting is *when did you last learn so easily*?

The purpose of the embedded command is to send directions straight to the unconscious mind, without the conscious mind blocking them. Erickson used his tone of voice to mark out the commands from the rest of the sentence, by deepening his voice for the command element, for example.

TIP

As you adopt lessons from communicators such as Erickson, remember that although what you say is important, the way you behave (body language, tone of voice, and so on) has the most effect.

Double binds

Double binds give people a choice but limit it. You cover the options and assume that the result you want is going to happen:

>> When will you clean up your clutter, before you've had lunch or after? (A typical one to use with messy teenagers or housemates!)

» Would you like to order it in blue or in green? (How about this one in a sales situation?)

Finding your own preferred model

To help you understand the differences between the Milton Model and the Meta Model, try this little role-playing exercise with a willing friend. One of you acts as the salesperson and the other as the customer:

» **The salesperson:** Your task is to sell an object or service to your partner. Your job is to persuade the customer to buy *without giving the person any details of what you're really selling* — see how interested you can make the other person while you remain artfully vague in the style of the Milton Model.

» **The customer:** Your job is to *get more specific information out of the salesperson* who's trying to sell to you. Challenge the vague language using tips from Chapter 15 on the Meta Model patterns to elicit detail from the generalized speech.

Afterward, ask yourself which role felt most natural to you? Do you prefer to see and discuss the sweeping big picture or do you feel more comfortable when you talk about detail?

Understanding the art of vagueness and why it's important

As you gain familiarity with the Milton Model, you can do what others before you have done: start to notice some of the language you hear as you listen to everyone

you meet. You can notice that most people have mastered the ability to communicate at a general level. In other words, most people have perfected the art of vagueness, which allows you to go inside so easily, does it not?

Vagueness is everywhere! Just consider these statements:

>> We can work it out.

>> Things can only get better.

>> It doesn't have to be like this.

>> Someday, we'll all be free.

>> We all have our problems.

Phrases like these are equally at home on the lips of politicians and pop stars, clairvoyants and copywriters. You hear them on the radio every morning, they pop out from the newspaper in your daily horoscope, and they emerge in the advertisements on your computer screen for the latest must-have products. They send you into a relaxed state. You can't help but agree with such highly generalized statements.

The power of using vague language lies in the fact that you get people into a different state. Such language distracts people from the outside world, so connecting with everybody in a group or gaining rapport with someone you don't know well becomes easier. When you're vague, the following things happen:

>> Your listeners find their own answers, which are more powerful and long lasting for them.

>> You don't instill your own ideas or put inappropriate suggestions in the way.

>> Your clients feel more in control, because they're free to explore different possibilities that you may never have thought of.

In addition, being vague also opens up your own map. Remember that the language you adopt affects you too — not just other people. So often people impose their own limits by the way in which they talk about themselves — those naughty thought viruses like "I'm not good enough" or "I'll never be able to do that" jump out and block their route to success. The Milton Model enables coaches to challenge their clients' limiting beliefs as well as helping you to do the following:

>> Arouse your natural curiosity

>> Discover more empowering ways of acting

>> Find times when you were at your best and return to that resourceful state

>> Think more clearly

TECHNICAL STUFF

NLP has adopted the idea of *chunking* from the world of IT; the term simply means breaking things into bits. Illustrated in Figure 16-1, this NLP concept says that information needs to be in chunks of the right size in order for you to process it — tiny details or the bigger picture, whatever is appropriate for the person to whom you're speaking. Chapter 15 on the Meta Model, this chapter, and Chapter 17 on telling stories all explore the different ways in which giving people information at the right level of detail or chunk size aids communication.

FIGURE 16-1:
Chunking up, down, and across with language.
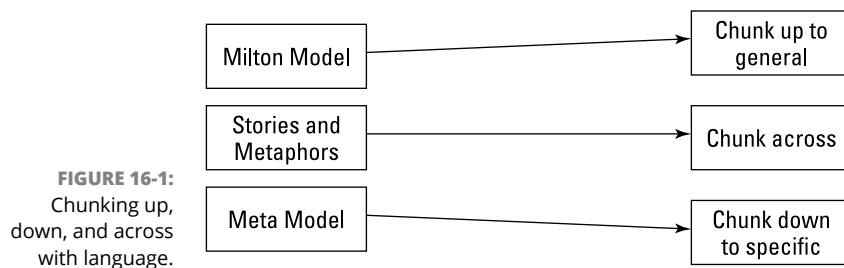
The Milton Model is a style of communication that moves upward and focuses ideas at a highly general level; the Meta Model has a downward direction, concentrating on very specific details. When you use stories and metaphors, you're simply moving sideways — chunking laterally — to match the same level of detail but using stories to help people make new connections.

Going Deeper into Hypnosis

Hypnosis has existed since the eighteenth century — its original founder is usually accepted to be Franz Anton Mesmer (whose name is the origin of the word *mesmerize*). Hypnosis — or trance — is a natural state of focused attention, one in which you become *en-tranced*, whereby your main focus is on your internal thoughts and feelings rather than the external world around you.

Mesmer became disregarded as his theories around magnetic fluids being blocked in the body were superseded by recognition that the power of putting people into a trance had nothing to do with fluids that needed to be demagnetized. However the interest in mesmerism persisted through theatrical entertainment and in Dickensian fiction for decades to follow. In 1843, there were some 200 stage magnetizers in Boston alone.

Thanks to the more recent influence of Milton Erickson (check out the earlier sidebar "Milton H. Erickson — the master at work"), NLP views hypnosis and everyday trance as safe and valuable routes to your *unconscious* (which, in this context, means other than conscious). Your unconscious signifies the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of which you're currently unaware.

Erickson said that his patients were having problems because they were out of rapport with their unconscious minds, suggesting that good mental health involves a rapport between the conscious and unconscious minds. His style of hypnosis enlists the help of the unconscious mind to facilitate changes in patterns of thinking and behavior and works by a therapist talking to somebody in such a way that the person becomes self-reflective. In this altered or dream-like state, the mind is relaxed. When the unconscious mind becomes more available, the therapist helps a client make changes, whether that's giving up smoking, letting go of a phobia or fear, or making other positive changes to improve the person's confidence and well-being.

Change in thought and belief processes takes place at an unconscious level. The Milton Model allows change by pacing the person's reality, and by that we mean truly acknowledging and respecting the qualities of somebody else's experiences that are likely to be different from your own. The model distracts the conscious mind and lets people access their unconscious mind.

When under hypnosis, some people go deep into the experience and others less so. Your brain becomes less active and muscle movement, blinking rate, and swallowing reflexes all slow down. Meditation and mindfulness are examples of self-induced hypnotic states.

Becoming comfortable with the idea of hypnosis

Words are powerful — they conjure up all kinds of memories and sensations and stir imaginations into action. If we say one word to you, *hypnosis*, what does your mind conjure up? If we ask you to let us hypnotize you, would you ponder the question for a second and answer "fine" or back away shaking your head. What reaction sticks in your mind?

If you've ever experienced hypnosis, you're likely to remember a pleasant and calm state of being, not dissimilar to mindfulness, meditation, or yoga relaxation. If you haven't, you may be curious or even downright terrified. "Don't start fiddling with my mind," we hear you say!

Some stage hypnotists still give hypnosis a bad name in encouraging people to perform all kinds of embarrassing acts to entertain others. Such shows engender fear about the control the hypnotist exercises over the minds of the subjects. Little wonder, therefore, that many people are skeptical where hypnosis is concerned. However, researchers from the Cultural and Social Neuroscience Research Group at London's Institute of Psychiatry say that there is no compelling evidence that they could get you to perform any act or crime that you would not normally do. So, there's no chance of covering up for your crimes by saying you were under the influence of hypnosis.

You may appreciate another way of looking at hypnosis. Simply think about it as a dream-like state in which the possibility of change becomes more available. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines hypnosis as "an artificially induced state of relaxation and concentration in which deeper parts of the mind become more accessible."

REMEMBER When you're stuck with a problem, hypnosis simply accelerates the process of getting to the solution and help you need.

People respond very differently to hypnosis, and the response can vary according to the context. The evidence shows that no particular gender or group has higher "hypnotizability." You need to be a willing participant in the process. Kate once found herself in a room of over 100 people who were entranced by a group hypnosis exercise, and she was virtually the only person not following the embedded suggestions of the presenter. She watched in surprise as others moved on to the stage taking their chairs with them. Later, she realized that she distrusted the person running the session and had naturally protected herself from taking part. Remember that only you have the power to control your thoughts, actions, and words.

WARNING As with any therapy or similar service, check out the professional qualifications of your hypnotherapist and ask for references. Apply the same safety measures you'd use when going on a blind date. Therapists should be completely transparent about their procedures. In particular, be cautious of entering a private home or space where you're alone with the person. If in doubt, taking a friend with you is a wise move.

REMEMBER Contrary to popular myth, under hypnosis, people are in complete control of their situation. The hypnotherapist acts merely as a facilitator and the client rejects any suggestion that they don't consider appropriate.

CREATING THE SAFE PLACE

Hypnotherapist and NLP coach Christina Bachini has developed a reputation for enabling clients to overcome their fears. She draws on a range of NLP skills with each client, often working with them in an Ericksonian style, using Milton language patterns to put them into a relaxed state and then telling "parallel stories" in which they're able to become more resourceful. She may use timeline searches to get in touch with earlier frightening experiences or submodality work to change the negative experiences.

She explains, "Clients know at a rational level that fears of things like spiders, sports performance, or public speaking are irrational. So much of my work is to make them feel safe and in control of a situation that scares them. When I have put them in a light trance, I may create a story in the moment that is similar to their own experience, and which their unconscious mind can use to overcome the fear."

She's also aware that fears can offer *secondary gain*; that is, some kind of benefit such as gaining attention from a loved one. She is careful to acknowledge people's reality rather than dismissing their fears.

When Christina's dentist learned she was a trained hypnotherapist, he began to send dentistry-phobic clients to her and was impressed with the results she achieved. Clearly, drilling in someone's mouth is much easier when the person feels confident and relaxed than when they're shaking and tense.

When Christina visited her dentist, he enlisted her help for his own problems: "My dentist told me that he had such a debilitating fear of flying that it was becoming very difficult to attend international conferences. He would travel with his wife and grip her legs so strongly in his panic that she would arrive bruised, and he was a jib-bering wreck. I worked with him in what I call 'conversational hypnosis' to create a parallel story about the pilot's extensive training and skills that my dentist could trust just as his own clients trust him as a safe pair of professional hands. I also asked him to recall earlier times when he had experienced similar feelings and he remembered the many instances as a child when his father would insist on placing him on a seat on the Ferris wheel at the fair; he was terrified that he would fall out. As he grew up, the similarity between the seat in the Ferris wheel and his annual fear became asso-ciated with the seat in the airplane, thus his fear of flying was created."

That a fear has been overcome can only be proven when clients revisit a situation that would make them fearful and find no problem remains. Christina's dentist booked him-self a flight to Portugal and returned to tell her how he had thoroughly enjoyed his time in the air. We're not so convinced that the dental clients return to say how much they *enjoy* the time in the surgery chair, although clearly the fear has turned to a quiet sense of calm acceptance, and they enjoy the end result of beautiful teeth!

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Experiencing everyday trances

Throughout the day, you move through a series of trance-like experiences, naturally going in and out of a trance several times a minute. Humans have a fantastic protection mechanism to cope with information overload!

One upside is that your trance allows you to meditate, plan, rest, and relax. Daydreaming lets you open your mind to new ideas. It also enhances your natural creativity — the trance state is when you make new connections between ideas and solve problems for yourself.

The downside comes when you constantly replay anxieties and aren't reacting healthily to the external world. Perhaps you need a break or some outside help if this situation applies to you. Coaching, therapy, and practices like breathing, mindfulness, and meditation help people break negative trances by finding their way to accessing more positive trances more easily. In fact, often hypnosis focuses on bringing people out of a unwanted trance and back to reality.

Mindfulness has become a recognized way of helping employees to overcome work-related stress. In the same way as NLP techniques enable people to become aware of all their senses (see Chapter 5) or to switch to "in time" (see Chapter 13), mindfulness is about what is happening in the moment and interrupting a pattern of worrying about what happened in the past or could happen in the future.

TRY THIS

What do you do to truly relax? To get yourself into that comfortable, easy state where all is well with the world? Ask the same question of any number of friends, family members, and colleagues and you get quite different suggestions. Relaxation is a light, everyday trance that gives you some downtime to balance out the highs.

Here's a simple way to induce a trance in yourself and others. Get together with a group of people. Spend 20 minutes telling each other about the things you do to relax. As you explain what you do, speak in a calm and gentle voice, consider which of other people's suggestions you may like to try yourself and notice that just talking about relaxation in this way creates a light trance in the whole group.

Our challenge to you is to ask yourself whether you're spending time relaxing and allowing yourself to daydream. Building relaxation time into each day and each week is a vital, life-giving tonic. Become aware of your own trances and make a choice not to get drawn into the negative ones.

When Kate asked a friend, a teenager with a strong *away from* meta program (see Chapter 7 for more about meta programs and how those with "away from" tendencies talk more about what they don't want than what they do want) what she most likes to do to relax, her response was as follows:

> I just find a good book and escape to somewhere pleasant and private. It's great when you're annoyed about something because you're distracted by what you read, you get involved with the characters, and then you forget what you're angry about.

A mere two hours after receiving this suggestion, Kate experienced a difficult late-night phone call with an anxious client. She knew that she wouldn't be able to sleep until she was fully relaxed and thus didn't want to get into a negative trance running her client's problems through her head. So she took her friend's advice, picked up a new novel, sank into the sofa and became so engrossed that the angst quickly slipped away — and a good night's sleep followed. In NLP terms, she "chunked up" from the specifics of the client's issues to a more general sense that "all is good with the world," deleting the details. Sometimes the simplest solutions to interrupting your trances really are the best.

Telling someone to sleep on a problem and a course of action will present itself in the morning is actually sound advice because it contains an essential truth. When you allow your conscious mind to rest, the unconscious mind is given the opportunity to process or retrieve information, and then the brain's amazing processing power can really get to work in a constructive way. So, next time you're struggling with an issue, as you go to bed, ask your unconscious mind to help you find the answer, and notice what comes to you in the morning when you wake.

GROUPTHINK

Have you ever noticed how group reactions to an event are bigger and more powerful than the sum of the individual parts? Perhaps you've been to a rock concert, religious gathering, or big sporting occasion or you've experienced a lengthy flight delay. People have the ability to create a group trance; they experience mass hysteria.

Groupthink is a term coined by Irving Janis to characterize situations in which people are carried along by group illusions and perceptions. As a Yale University social psychologist, Janis was fascinated with the question of how groups of experts, especially in the White House, were able to make such terrible decisions. One of the most famous examples is found in the abortive invasion of Cuba at the Bay

(continued)

of Pigs by 1,200 anti-Castro exiles. Launched on April 17, 1961, by the Kennedy administration, it almost led to war. "How could we have been so stupid?" President Kennedy later remarked. In retrospect, the plan looked completely misguided, and yet at the time, it was never seriously questioned or challenged. Kennedy and his advisors had unwittingly developed shared illusions that stopped them thinking critically and engaging with reality.

Janis believes that, when overcome by groupthink, chief executives or their advisors aren't stupid, lazy, or evil. Rather, he sees them as victims of "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they're deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action."

When people operate in groupthink mode, they automatically apply the "let's preserve group harmony at all cost" test to every decision they face.

Chapter **17**

Telling Tales to Reach the Unconscious: Stories, Fables, and Metaphors

We want to tell you a story. Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master in the Meiji era, received a university professor who came to enquire about Zen Buddhism. Nan-in poured them both some tea. He filled up his visitor's cup and then kept on pouring. The professor watched until unable to restrain himself. "It's overfull. No more will go in," he said.

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you're full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

What was happening for you as you read those words? What came into your head? Your response to this little story is unique to you, and if you ask a group of people for their reactions to a story, you're going to get totally different responses. Stories get to the parts that other words don't reach. They speak to you at an unconscious level.

Through stories, you can get your message across in a way that's much more effective than any logical argument because stories connect to people's

experiences, memories, and emotions. People often talk about social influencing as if it's something new. Yet throughout history, human beings have influenced through storytelling — just using different media.

In NLP terms, stories help build rapport. They enable you to convey information indirectly, pace someone's current reality, and then lead him on to a new, healthier reality. You can move away from problems to different outcomes and open up new possibilities. So when you're sitting comfortably, we will begin.

Processing Stories and Metaphors

Your brain is a natural pattern-matching machine (in Chapter 3 you can find more details about what goes on inside your mind) and you're constantly matching and sorting things. When you hear something new, you make connections and say, "Aha. This is like *this*. This reminds me of *that*." Your brain naturally recognizes patterns, and for this reason stories and metaphors transport you to a different place and put you into the type of trance that we describe in Chapter 16 — a deeply relaxed state in which you're very resourceful and your brain becomes naturally responsive to presented patterns.

NLP defines metaphors broadly as stories or figures of speech that imply a comparison. NLP suggests that stories and metaphors work as valuable communication tools because they distract the conscious mind and overload it with processing. Meanwhile the unconscious mind steps in to come up with creative solutions and the resources you need. Thus, you're able to make new meanings and solve problems.

Understanding the Stories of Your Life

You live in a world of stories, and you're an accomplished storyteller. Don't believe us? Consider this. When you recount the day's events to a friend or partner, you're telling a story. When you post your exploits on Facebook or gossip on the telephone to your friends or describe a business process to a client, you're telling a story. Events don't have to be make-believe to qualify as a story.

Getting to grips with storytelling basics

Whether they relate actual or imaginary events, good stories have four key ingredients that make up a classic hero's journey. Think about a child's fairy-tale

handed down through generations, such as *Hansel and Gretel*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, or *Cinderella* or the more modern *Harry Potter* adventures and see if you can recognize these elements:

- » **Characters:** You need a hero, plus goodies and baddies along the way

- » **Plot:** The storyline of the journey that the hero takes

- » **Conflict:** The challenge or difficulty that the hero faces

- » **Resolution:** The result or outcome that happens at the end of the tale (we hope it doesn't end in tears!)

Stories engage the whole brain in terms of processing words and plot sequences as well as imagination, visualization, and creativity. Research carried out at Emory University shows that areas in the cortex that relate to input from your different senses are activated by evocative, sensory-rich words. For example, words relating to flavors and aromas activate pathways in the brain that deal with smell. Words and phrases relating to touch and movement trigger the sensory (touch) and motor (movement) cortex. Thus, peppering your stories with these rich sensory words will makes them more engaging and memorable.

Many stories are told solely to entertain, but you can use stories for a number of purposes:

- » To focus concentration

- » To illustrate a point

- » To get over a lesson that people remember

- » To sow new ideas

- » To get people to recognize their own problems

- » To make a complex idea simpler

- » To change people's mood

- » To challenge behavior

- » To galvanize someone into action

- » To have fun

TIP
When crafting your story, think about what you want to create in the minds of your audience and use sensory-rich language in your narrative to evoke images, memories, and feelings.

Working on your storytelling

Stories and metaphors work in business communication just as well as in a social or spiritual context. No wonder the role of social media influencers has become so commercially valuable in the last decade; people are interested in what their

favorite folks are doing in music, fashion, travel, or any area of interest. Businesses tell stories to do the following:

>> Communicate information

>> Convey organizational values

>> Educate people

>> Influence customers to choose their products or services

>> Help teams to evaluate options and make decisions

Stories engage people more fully, which is why customer examples, testimonials, and case studies work so well to reinforce a business message. They're so much more powerful than a pure product promotion.

In many businesses, stories develop about the birth of the company that keep people in touch with its fundamental values. During our early days working at Hewlett-Packard (HP), all the employees connected with the story of how Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard started out in a Californian garage, their struggles for survival on the way to success in Palo Alto, and their continual dedication to the core principles that were written down and related to all 100,000 employees as *The HP Way*.

Corporate tales such as these engage people and align them to a common sense of purpose. They help to retain the sense of teamwork and unity of a smaller business even as an organization grows into a corporate giant. In HP, employees respected the founders because they were able to identify with two fellow human beings who became renowned corporate leaders thanks to their skills, grit, and determination. They felt that Bill and Dave continued to value people as well as business performance in a way that was outstanding in the demanding "hire and fire" corporate world.

ANECDOTE We remember one former CEO, Lew Platt, speaking at an HP Women's Conference and telling the story of bringing up his children as a single parent after his wife died. He talked about the worry of getting a phone call telling him that his child was sick just as he was going into an important business negotiation. Lew knew how to connect with the heart of an audience by speaking from his own experience.

Storytelling isn't a skill to confine to business leaders. At work, you can begin to develop your own stories as a tool for getting your message across to colleagues and clients as well as to your bosses. But don't make your stories long-winded or amazingly elaborate. You may begin by noting some of your successes or interesting experiences and building them into a relevant anecdote to pull out of the bag at the appropriate moment.

Stories from your own experience can dramatically enliven an explanation of a dry subject such as customer service, quality control, software programs, or safety procedures.

In a similar vein, if you want to influence customers to buy your product or make the right decision, they're more likely to listen to you when you post a reel on social media with your brand ambassadors' tales of success. This less forthright approach can be more effective than putting forward a direct opinion on what you want them to do.

So, too, if you want to manage your career progression positively, don't wait until your annual performance review from your boss to hear how you're doing. As some of our successful clients have discovered, a few stories that demonstrate achievements fed into conversations as a weekly tidbit during lunch or over coffee can be much more effective.

Passing on a gift to the next generation

The storytelling tradition — from Greek myths, Arthurian legends, and Aesop's Fables through to modern writers — forms part of the rich human heritage that connects past, present, and future generations. Similarly, the stories you tell about your life (or hear about the lives of others in your family) perform the same function — they connect generations as well.

What stories do you love to hear and tell about your life? Perhaps you've heard family stories about when you were born, your first day at school, or the important events and people in your early life. Truth can be stranger and more entertaining than fiction. And the tales get told and retold, each time with fresh embellishment.

ANECDOTE

Family tales that get handed down by word-of-mouth become lost as families split and generations pass away. When Kate's neighbor, Margaret, retired, she took her interest in her family ancestors further than just compiling the family tree. Her more permanent legacy to her family is a fascinating bound collection of stories. Alongside the tree, she collected anecdotes from all living members of the family. She published them for the family and later generations to enjoy and understand more about their heritage. If you were to do the same, what stories would you like to record for posterity?

TRY THIS

Here's a game of anecdotes that may enliven a family get-together. Write one of the following words on each of five blank cards: farce, thriller, comedy, tragedy, TV soap. Take a card, think of a family anecdote and tell a story in the style that's written on the card.

Grasping the Power of Metaphors

Just as people tell stories all day, your ordinary conversations are richly embroidered with metaphors. Consider these examples (with the metaphors in italics):

>> Look, it's a *jungle* out there!

>> He was *putty in their hands*.

>> She's a *pain in the neck*.

>> He's a *breath of fresh air*.

>> We can *cut the atmosphere with a knife*.

Some people say that, although a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures.

Using metaphors in NLP

The word metaphor is derived from Greek and literally means "to carry across." Metaphors make a comparison, a parallel between two sometimes unrelated terms, and can be a powerful and innovative way of describing a situation; they can help listeners to reflect on themselves or to see a difficult situation in a new light, perhaps providing a novel way of resolving the problem.

TECHNICAL STUFF

In NLP, metaphors are used in a broader sense than that defined in English grammar — they're used to help people move from one context to another. NLP calls this movement *chunking across* or *chunking sideways*. As explained in Chapter 16, chunking is about moving up and down levels of detail (up to the big picture or down to specifics) to communicate with somebody at the most appropriate and effective level.

As Nick Owen describes in his book *The Magic of Metaphor* (Crown House Publishing, 2001), "Metaphors are not simply poetic or rhetorical embellishments, but powerful devices for shaping perception and experience."

ANECDOTE

In one of Kate's presentation workshops, a participant, Jacinda, was looking at creative ways to liven up a presentation to a group of teenagers. As a careers advisor, Jacinda's work takes her into schools where she needs to make apprenticeship schemes sound inspiring to students.

At first, she stood up and explained the options open to the students in the hope that they'd listen because of her enthusiasm and in-depth knowledge. Later, as she thought about ways of refining her presentation with stories and metaphors, Jacinda hit on the idea of using the metaphor of a newly released mobile phone — something with which all the youngsters identified. She compared all the various career routes and options with the sophisticated functions of the latest phone model and demonstrated them with images posted to a Pinterest board. In this way, she bridged the gap from the advisor to the student and found a way to develop a more compelling talk. Thanks to the appealing metaphor, she discovered a fresh approach to enliven her story and inspire the young people.

To practice creating metaphors and have a little fun at the same time, try this exercise. You need three people: Person A has a subject (writing a book, for example) that he wants to communicate in a different way. Follow these steps:

1. **Person A says, "[The topic] is like. . . ."**

   Using the book-writing example, Person A may say, "Writing a book is like. . . ."

2. **Person B thinks of an object — any object at all to complete the sentence "Writing a book is like. . . ."**

   Person B, for example, may say, ". . . an apple."

3. **Person C makes the connection.**

   For example, they may say, ". . . because you can get your teeth into it."

Applying metaphors to find new solutions

In his book *Sleight of Mouth* (Dilts Strategy Group, 2017), Robert Dilts relates the story of a young man in a psychiatric ward suffering from the delusion that he's Jesus Christ. He spends his days unproductively, rambling around, annoying, and being ignored by the other patients. All attempts by the psychiatrists and their aides fail to convince the man of his delusion.

One day, a new psychiatrist arrives on the scene. After observing the patient quietly for some time, he approaches the young man. "I understand that you have some experience as a carpenter," he says. "Well . . . yes, I guess I do," replies the patient. The psychiatrist explains to him that they're building a new recreation room at the facility and need the help of someone with the skills of a carpenter. "We could really use your help," says the psychiatrist, "that is, if you're the type of person who likes to help others."

And so the story ends well. The patient has been respected for his beliefs and becomes open to communicating with people once more. Now his therapeutic healing can begin.

In this story, the new psychiatrist develops rapport with the client by working with his own metaphor of carpentry. The patient believes that he's Jesus Christ, and so the psychiatrist accepts that and doesn't attempt to contradict. Instead, the psychiatrist works with the patient's belief and adopts the same metaphor — Jesus the carpenter — to set the patient on the road to recovery.

Skilled therapists in all disciplines frequently work with the client's own metaphors to help shift problems. In the same way, you can work with other people's metaphors to aid communication in everyday conversation. For example:

>> To convey bad news like project delays or job changes

>> To calm down an anxious teenager facing exams

>> To explain a complicated subject to a group of people

>> To inspire confidence or courage in a young child

>> To reduce anxiety for a friend facing illness

TIP You can use word-play to defuse tension, through themes such as the weather and nature — moving from rain and storms to sunshine and calm or comparing a challenging situation with climbing a mountain or crossing a river. Also, relating a message in terms of a friend's favorite sport — golf, tennis, sailing, or football — can help elicit shifts in thinking.

As an example, when your colleague at work tells you that "this project is a real nightmare," you can gently drop words connected to sleep and dreaming into the conversation to gain more information or lead the person to a more positive state of thinking. So you may feed some of the following types of language into the discussion:

>> What aspects of the project are keeping you awake at night?

>> Are there some scary bits?

>> Perhaps people need to sleep on this for a while?

>> How would you like to get this put to bed?

>> So in your wildest dreams, what would you see happening?

Anthony is a therapist who works with clients with addictive behaviors. He told us this:

> I had a client who told me about the pleasure he derived from his drinking until it got out of control. Initially he described the delight of his favorite tipple — the anticipation and smell of the first glass, how appealing it looked in the bottle, beautifully packaged and presented. But as he went on to describe the feelings of helplessness as the addiction overtook him, the alcohol was transformed into an ugly spirit that haunted and frightened him. Over a period of time, we were able to work with his story, develop the plot and rework it to have a happier ending. He could then believe in a future in which he could break free from the addiction that was overwhelming his life.

Employing direct and indirect metaphors

NLP distinguishes between direct and indirect metaphors:

>> **Direct metaphor:** Compares one situation with another that has an obvious link in terms of content. For example, it may compare learning a new computer software application with learning to drive. Both are about learning.

>> **Indirect metaphor:** Makes comparisons that aren't immediately obvious. For example, it may compare learning new computer software with cooking a meal or planning a holiday. Such indirect metaphors form the basis of the most creative advertising campaigns.

SYMBOLIC MODELING

James Lawley and Penny Tompkins, authors of *Metaphors in Mind* (Developing Company Press, 2006) have developed a process called Symbolic Modeling. This process enhances the ability of those trained in NLP and other methods to work at a symbolic level with clients. "Metaphor is particularly valuable with those who find it difficult to describe what is happening for them because of trauma, lack of self-awareness, or embarrassment," says James. "For example, in a business meeting, a senior leader may not want to say that he's scared about the way the organization is going. However, by getting into the symbolic domain, he can readily admit that it's 'like a rough sea getting more turbulent.' This enables him to express his fears without exposing himself to judgment."

Working with symbols and metaphors allows clients to feel more resourceful when dealing with challenging topics. As psychotherapists, Penny and James are experienced

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at working symbolically with clients who've been through severe trauma. Sometimes a client may find that speaking about the details of the event is too painful. "Working with clients' personal metaphors," Penny says, "honors their unique experience and creates a context in which change can take place organically. This can happen because the Clean Language of David Grove prevents therapists from unwittingly adding to or changing a client's symbolic experience."

We provide the Clean Language question set in Chapter 18, and you can find more on Clean Language and modeling in Chapter 19.

Permission from James Lawley and Penny Tompkins.

Building Your Own Stories

In her "Passion to Publication" writing workshops, Kate encouraged budding authors to create their own origin stories and then develop them into an article, blog post, or book. These stories are the personal ones that have fired up the person's passion for what they're writing about and relate the times when the writer felt the extremes of emotion — from peaks of excitement to troughs of anxiety. As each person in the group shares a story, it inevitably fires up new stories for the other writers as they connect the writer's experience with similar ones of their own. The most convincing writing tells compelling stories, just as the most compelling tales are those told from the heart.

Strong communicators recognize the power of story to achieve rapport more readily and captivate their audience — whether that is with one person or many. Indeed much therapeutic work depends on the narrative form of communication. In this section, we gather together ideas for you to develop your own repertoire of stories and build your skills as an engaging storyteller. Even if you never thought of yourself as a storyteller before, you can soon see how to capture your own story ideas and organize your thoughts for maximum effect.

Using the personal story builder journal

Everyday experiences can form the basis of your own compelling stories. Here's a way to capture and record storylines that you can adapt later.

TRY THIS

1. **Find a situation that generated an emotion: write the emotion down (was it joy, contentment, pride, fear, anger, shock, confusion, guilt, and so on?).**

2. **Name the characters involved.**

3. **Tell what happened by briefly describing three key points in the storyline.**

4. **Relate the outcome: In other words, how did it end?**

5. **Describe something funny or interesting that was communicated.**

6. **Explain what you learned from this story.**

7. **List your ideas for developing this story: identify where, when, and to whom you're going to tell it.**

Stories develop and change over time. Come back to the journal at regular intervals to extend your repertoire of stories that you can create. As you listen to speakers who inspire or entertain you, notice that their storylines are quite simple. Feel free to record interesting stories you hear others tell and put your spin on them to make them your own.

As you begin to create your own favorite stories, think about the following aspects:

>> How are you going to *start* the story, and how will you *finish*? Some great starts lose their way (and their readers) long before the finishing post.

>> What happens in the *middle* to provide the dramatic interest — what are the interesting landmarks, battles, dilemmas, or conflicts along the way?

>> Who are the *characters* — who's the hero and what about the supporting cast? How can you make them memorable?

>> How can you make sure that you build the content around a strong framework?

THE STORY OF VULNERABILITY

TED is a global community, famous for its talks, freely available online, and conferences, which welcomes people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world. On its website (www.ted.com), the TED community states, "We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and, ultimately, the world."

One of the most popular TED storytellers is Brené Brown, whose talk "The Power of Vulnerability" has reached some 67 million viewers. In it she describes how her social work research developed into groundbreaking work on the emotion of shame

(continued)

and completely transformed her own life and work. She started out as an academic who thought she could study, control, and predict outcomes to one who discovered the courage to be imperfect. Today she is known as an expert in the study of shame, authenticity, and belonging.

From thousands of interviews, focus groups and data gathered over a decade, she learned that some people feel they are never good enough, while others "the whole-hearted," always know they are enough. The wholehearted don't have better lives than others; rather, what sets them apart is that they feel a deep sense of love and belonging and believe they are worthy. They actively choose rest and play rather than exhaustion as a status symbol. They also engage in some kind of creativity, and Brené argues that unused creativity turns into grief, judgment, rage, and shame.

Through her talks and bestselling books, Brené has inspired people from all walks of life to live wholeheartedly and recognize that you can't resist vulnerability. While we may feel vulnerability is the center of the darker emotions of fear, guilt and grief, it's also the birthplace of joy, hope, and empathy. She says, "Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center of meaningful human experiences."

Discovering more ways to flex your storytelling muscles

Effective storytelling is a fabulous skill that's worth developing — a well-told story captures the audience and remains with the people long after the other details of an event are forgotten. Here are some suggestions for you to hone your technique:

» Start with simple stories and then get more adventurous as your skills grow.

» Head for the children's library for all sorts of examples of folk and fairy tales that you can adapt to any context. One of our clients describes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as the best business book ever written.

» Remember that when you tell a story the focus is on you. Practice and live with your story so that when you perform, you can command the audience's attention and take everyone with you. Know the first lines and last lines by heart and simplify the structure to a few key points.

» Tell a humorous story with a deadpan face. The element of surprise is a powerful tool, and you'll create a bigger impact than if you smirk your way through the tale.

» Hold on to that essential ingredient of rapport to keep people listening (head to Chapter 6 for more details on creating rapport).

» Arrange the time, place, and setting in which you tell the story. Make sure that people are relaxed and comfortable. Campfire settings and flickering log fires make for perfect storytelling moments — as do seats under shady trees on a lazy summer's day.

» Think of your voice as a well-tuned musical instrument. Notice how your breathing affects your voice and practice a range of sounds and volumes. Enjoy exploiting all your vocal skills to make your story come to life.

» See what you can discover from other people's stories and the way they tell them. Check out TED talks online, YouTube videos, and podcasts to see how the speakers work with their voices, their audiences, and the stage.

» Speaking from the heart rather than reading from a book or script is more powerful — and people allow you to be less than word perfect.

» Stimulate the senses of your audience so that its members can see pictures, hear sounds, feel emotions, even smell and taste the delicious tale you're concocting for them.

» Have a great opening line.

Using subtle persuasion

A powerful NLP technique for getting "buy in" to your story while overcoming any potential arguments or disagreements is *pre-framing*. This technique is effective because you can use it to set the scene for the messages you want your audience to hear. It allows you to diffuse objections and open your audience's mind to possibilities it may not have considered. Pre-framing can be as simple as setting out the itinerary for a training program or the agenda for a meeting. For example, if you're in a sales situation and suspect that price may be an issue, you may say something along the lines of, "The reason why our company would like to work with your organization is because we provide a high-quality service. Now I know some people prefer a cheaper option, but our clients feel valued because they know we pay attention to *their needs*."

Using the phrase "their needs" suggests to the prospective client's unconscious mind that their needs, when they're your client, will also be given attention.

In her Beyond Distress training, Romilla will say something along the lines of, "This talk is about stress and I realize you're here in your capacity as a business

person and will be familiar with the term 'work–life balance.' This term implies a split, but you aren't a dichotomy: The stress you experience at work affects the quality of your life at home, and the stress you feel at home can affect your performance at work. During our time together, you will encounter valuable ways not only to overcome stress but also actually use it to your advantage. I thus urge you to think of ways in which to apply what you discover today in dealing with a difficult teenager, creating a dialogue with an uncommunicative partner, or managing a difficult boss or colleague."

Adding loops to your story: And this reminds me of . . .

Have you noticed how, in a novel, a writer may open up a number of loops or storylines that run in parallel throughout the book?

One of the greatest storybooks in the world, *The Thousand and One Nights*, tells of King Shahryar's unpleasant behavioral problem. He'd been in the habit of killing a succession of his young virgin brides after their first night of marriage.

The speed at which he was decimating the female population meant the source of potential brides had begun to run dry. Thanks to the cleverness of Shahrazad, the daughter of his senior statesman and the king's potential next victim, the pattern was broken. Shahrazad is said to have collected a thousand and one books of histories and poetry, fascinated as she was by the lives of kings and past generations.

On her marriage night, she entertained the king with a tale that hung in the air unfinished at dawn. The king's curiosity got the better of him awaiting the completion of the tale and he spared her life — again and again and again — as the thousand and one tales unfolded. And he broke the habit of killing his new brides!

TIP You too can build story loops into your storytelling skill set. This advanced device can help with the stories you tell, whether in a presentation, training, or social setting.

You begin one story, and before you complete it say, "Ah, that reminds me of," or "Have I told you the one about." The stories hang in the air, incomplete; people are left uncertain, wondering what happened and how the story's going to end. This technique enables you to hold the attention of your audience and focus people's concentration as they try to create order out of the confusion. You can build story loops naturally as you wander from subject to subject. Be sure to close the stories off eventually, however, or you simply end up annoying your audience.

Kate was reminded of the effect of this approach recently, even though it was not used intentionally. She had been at a social event and met some delightful and funny new people who were neighbors of her friend Anna. When mentioning that she had enjoyed meeting the neighbors to her friend, Anna responded: "Ah, there's something very interesting I need to tell you about the lady" and then proceeded to say, "Not just now; I'll tell you next time I see you!" Kate was left confused.

AND FINALLY, SIT BACK, RELAX, AND ENJOY A STORY FROM THE SUFI TRADITION

There was once a small boy who banged a drum all day and loved every moment of it. He wouldn't be quiet, no matter what anyone else said or did. Various people who called themselves Sufis, and other well-wishers, were called in by neighbors and asked to do something about the child.

The first so-called Sufi told the boy that he would, if he continued to make so much noise, perforate his eardrums; this reasoning was too advanced for the child, who was neither a scientist nor a medic. The second told him that drum-beating was a sacred activity and should be carried out only on special occasions. The third offered the neighbors plugs for their ears; the fourth gave the boy a book; the fifth gave the neighbors books that described a method of controlling anger through biofeedback; the sixth gave the boy meditation exercises to make him placid and explained that all reality was imagination. Like all placebos, each of these remedies worked for a short while, but none worked for very long.

Eventually, a real Sufi came along. He looked at the situation, handed the boy a hammer and chisel, and said, "I wonder what's *inside* the drum?"

Chapter **18**

Asking the Right Questions

When you know the "right" questions to ask, you get the results you want much faster. Throughout this book, in the true spirit of NLP, we deliberately aim to be nonjudgmental, and so you can quite legitimately say that no "right" or "wrong" questions exist, only different ones.

So, let's be more precise. When we talk about asking the "right" questions, we're looking specifically for incisive questions — those that put your finger on the nub of an issue, those that have a positive effect in the shortest possible time. In this context, the "wrong" questions are those that send you off-course, meandering down dead ends and gathering interesting but irrelevant information.

In this book, we explain and demonstrate that your language is powerful; it triggers an emotional response in you, as well as others. Therefore, you can make a difference as you begin to choose your language with increasing awareness. In this chapter, we bring together some of the most useful questions you can ask in different situations to make things happen for yourself and for others. Knowing the right questions to ask may make a difference for you when you want to do the following:

» Get your life going in the right direction

» Make the best decisions

- >> Help others to take more responsibility
- >> Select and motivate people
- >> Coach others to overcome their limitations

Question-Asking Tips and Strategies

Before rushing on to the critical question you probably want answered — "What are the magic questions that do make a real difference?" — take a quick breather and consider *how* to ask questions when you're working with people, which is just as important as *what* to ask.

In this section, we encourage you to challenge your personal style and assumptions and adapt your own behavior in order to function at your best, whether you're the client or in the coaching seat.

Cleaning up your language: Removing bias

Have you ever wondered how many of the questions you ask make assumptions based on what *you* want and *your* personal map of reality rather than on what other people want? Human beings find not projecting their own ideas, needs, wants, and enthusiasms on to others difficult — especially on to those closest to them. Your personality and life experiences make you unconsciously biased in your interactions with others. You influence other people all the time; you just can't help it. For that reason, most questions aren't what we call *clean* — in the sense that they assume something, as in the famous "When did you stop beating your wife?" question.

REMEMBER

Even that one small word *beating* has different meanings for different people. Did you think of *beating* in the context of physical violence, or in the competitive sense of winning at a sport or game, or something else entirely?

Therapists undertake many years of training to be able to work with their clients like a clean mirror, which can simply reflect the issues back to clients so they can deliberate on them. Some mirrors get to shine brighter than others! After all, you know how much you can communicate just through one raised eyebrow or a suppressed giggle. (This is the reason why Freud had his clients lying on a couch while he, as the therapist, sat behind their heads!)

TIP — If you want to be respectful of other people's views, make a point of noticing how well you can avoid prejudicing the result of a discussion. Are you telling somebody else what to do based on what you would do yourself?

Beware of making the kinds of generalizations or limiting decisions that we talk about in Chapter 15. Listen to what you say, and if you hear yourself issuing instructions that use words such as *must*, *should*, *ought to*, and *can't* — the time is right to stop directing the action and imposing your stance on others.

FISHING FOR ANSWERS

A therapist was working with a client who told her that she'd had a dream. All the client was able to remember was that it was raining and she'd been to a restaurant. Then she woke up feeling hot and anxious:

Therapist: Oh, so your dream was about fish, was it?

Client: I don't know.

Therapist: But you know that you were in a restaurant?

Client: That's right.

Therapist: And it's likely fish was on the menu?

Client: Yes, most restaurants have fish on the menu.

Therapist: And it was raining, so that could represent water and fish swimming in water?

Client: Well, yes, you're right.

Therapist: Sounds like we're getting closer. Perhaps you were feeling like a fish that had been caught and then cooked, even? What's that all about?

Of course, this story is pure fiction, but it illustrates how, in any conversation, you can easily find yourself listening to one point and then leading somebody into your subjective interpretation of the facts. This is why it's always important to do some due diligence on the professional qualifications of any therapist or practitioner whom you work with.

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Imagine that you're a manager coaching or mentoring a colleague or employee at work. In a coaching session, beginning with a clear aim in mind is essential. Therefore, you may quite reasonably ask, "What do we want to work on today?"

The question is simple, direct, and focuses attention on the shared understanding that you're *working* on something. Your words set out the intention for the type of interaction you're sharing: This isn't just a friendly chat; we have work to do today. This question is a "better" opening in the context of this section than asking, "Shall we work out why you haven't finished the project as fast as Fiona?" because you're giving the other person some space to think and bring real live challenges to the discussion.

Coaching is about exploration and challenge; you listen, ask great questions, and point out what you observe, thus enabling clients to take responsibility and commit to action. Clean questions help you achieve these aims. Any suggestions you include must be phrased in such a way that people think for themselves, instead of being influenced by your own bias. So, an even cleaner opening question that directs a client to think carefully for themself may be, "What would you like to have happen in this session?"

Curiosity may have killed the cat, as the saying goes, but a different perspective may be that curiosity is the pathway to understanding. You choose which saying suits you best.

Discovering Clean Language questions

The counseling psychologist David Grove created a body of knowledge known as Clean Language, in which he perfected the art of asking clean questions. This work continues to be developed and now forms part of some NLP practitioner training modules. (You can read more about David Grove's work and the people who patiently modeled him for a number of years, Penny Tompkins and James Lawley, in Chapter 19.)

Grove created a set of questions that can be used in a variety of applications — in psychotherapy and coaching, of course, but also in health, business, and education. The questions come in three types and work in different ways:

>> **Current perception questions:** Expanding the client's understanding of a situation.

>> **Moving time questions:** Working with the client's sense of time.

>> **Intention questions:** Concentrating on the outcome the client wants.

The overall aim of Clean Language is to remove the bias inherent in the questioner's language by exploring people's model of the world from their own perspective. Although the questions can look strange out of context, just consider the subtle difference between asking a really clean question such as "And is there anything else?" and "What are you going to do now?" The latter question clearly includes the expectation from the questioner that the person must do something.

MAKING DECISIONS WITH CLEAN LANGUAGE

A student was having great difficulty trying to describe why making decisions was such a problem for her. Penny Tompkins shared the following dialogue between herself and the student during which she used Clean Language questions:

"'And, making decisions is like what?' I enquired.

She thought for a moment and replied: "You know, it's like going to the dentist. I'm in the waiting room and I'm dreading going in."

After a couple more clean questions, I could tell she was deep inside her metaphor by the amount of time she took to answer and in the way she finally said, "I really need courage."

"And what kind of courage is that courage?" was my next question.

"A courage that will help me go through it rather than delay any longer."

"And when courage will help you go through it; where is that courage?"

She touched her chest with her right hand and said, "Inside me. In my heart."

I continued asking Clean Language questions so she could develop her resource metaphor for courage, "a strong energy filling my heart."

At the end of our time together she said, "If you had told me when we started that a comment like 'going to the dentist' could link so directly with my decision-making, I wouldn't have believed it. In fact, you couldn't have told me; I had to experience it for myself."

Thanks to Penny Tompkins and James Lawley for providing this anecdote.

Starting the Clean Language process

Penny and James suggest that one way to begin the Clean Language questioning process is to put the client into a resourceful state by developing a *resource metaphor*. You can start the process of developing a resource metaphor by asking the following question:

> And when you're at your best, that's like what?

You can ask this question generally, as we've just written it, or you can make it more specific by placing it in a specific context, as we do by adding the following words in square brackets:

> And when you're [working] at your best, that's like what?
>
> And when you're [collaborating] at your best, that's like what?
>
> And when you're [focusing] at your best, that's like what?

Or try adding a personal quality:

> And when you're most [patient], that's like what?
>
> And when you're most [loving], that's like what?
>
> And when you're most [content], that's like what?

When the person has created a resource metaphor, you can then ask the following clean question that begins the process of developing a desired outcome (goal, objective) metaphor:

> And what you would like to have happen, is like what?

When the person has spoken, written, or drawn a metaphor in answer to these questions, you can ask the first five developing questions listed in the next section to bring the metaphor to life. You want the person to be living in their personal metaphorical landscape (to use several metaphors!).

Developing current perception questions

Here are some examples of asking clean questions that increase a person's understanding of a situation:

>> **Attributes:** And is there anything else about . . .? And what kind of . . .?

>> **Location:** And where/whereabouts is . . .?

>> **Relationship:** And is there a relationship between . . . and . . .? And when what happens to . . .?

>> **Metaphor:** And that's . . . like what?

Trying out moving time questions

These clean questions are great when working with a person's sense of time:

>> **Before:** And what happens just before . . .?

>> **After:** And then what happens/what happens next?

>> **Source:** And where does/could . . . come from?

Working on intention questions

The following clean questions are useful to explore a person's desired outcome:

>> **Desired outcome:** And what would you like to have happen?

>> **Necessary conditions:** And what needs to happen for this desired outcome to be reached? And can . . .?

TIP

To work well with these questions, you can benefit from formal training in Clean Language. However, you can begin to make small adjustments to clean up your questions yourself, so that you act as an unbiased facilitator instead of unwittingly influencing another person's thinking.

TRY THIS

Imagine that someone describes a problem to you, such as having too much work, and requests your help. If you ask the person "And that workload is like what?" you're inviting them to work with their own metaphor. The person may come up with a metaphor such as, "It's like a brick on the back of my neck." You can then simply ask, "And what would you like to have happen when there's a brick on the back of your neck?" so that you lead them toward coming up with their own solution.

As with all the suggestions in this chapter, just try it and see how it works.

Recognizing that the way you behave is what counts

Own up now: Have you ever shouted at someone, "Stop shouting at me!"? Non-sense, isn't it, expecting someone else to do what you clearly aren't

demonstrating in your own behavior. Yet people do it all the time. You can easily see in someone else the negative qualities that you want to change in yourself.

The art of encouraging somebody else to change is to model that behavior yourself. If you want somebody to become curious, be curious yourself. If you want someone to be positive and helpful, you too need to model that behavior. If you think that someone just needs to lighten up, inject some fun into the proceedings.

Instead of expecting other people to change, lead the way yourself. One of the best lessons that we authors have learned is, "The way you behave with other people determines the way people behave with you." So when you ask questions, be aware of how you're behaving as well as what you're saying.

Pressing the pause button

Silence is golden. Pausing for a moment when one person has finished speaking is helpful, and in turn lets you think before you speak.

ANECDOTE

The late, great British broadcaster Alan Whicker created a fascinating television series *Whicker's World,* in which he interviewed all manner of people from monks to gangsters. Whicker was famous for his unique style of interviewing people. He'd ask a question and then leave a long pause after receiving an answer. The interviewees, feeling the need to fill the silence, elaborated with details that gave far greater insights into their personality than the initial answer revealed. Like all great interviewers, Whicker's best question was the one he never even asked: He simply stood there, raised an eyebrow and nodded until the interviewee responded.

Pauses give other people critical space to process what you said and to consider their reply in a mindful way. Simply giving people unhurried time to think within a structured framework of questioning is a huge benefit in all kinds of situations. Listening to others is a generous act and an undeveloped, undervalued skill in most organizations, which is why coaching is so powerful. Trained coaches and therapists understand the power of listening and the importance of powerful questioning combined with silence so that clients can process their thoughts. They listen not only to what's being said, but also to the message beneath the words, paying acute attention to what they notice in terms of the client's breathing, mannerisms, and body language. They know that giving clients space to think puts them into the most resourceful state to solve their own issues.

TRY THIS

Often in a busy work environment, the more boisterous characters exert their views to the detriment of the inverted thinkers. If you're holding a team get together, allow some time for a group "listening space." Set a timer for three or five minutes per person to allow each person to have their say. They may not use all of the time initially and even say that they're finished. Yet stick with the time

slot. When all has fallen silent, the person who has the space to be listened to will reflect and often come out with a new insight to share.

Great listeners create productive meetings, build strong relationships, and find the insights to solve complex issues.

Testing your questions

If you have any doubts about whether your question is appropriate for helping a person or situation move to a better place, stop and ask yourself the following:

>> Is my next question going to add value in this conversation? Is it taking us closer to where we want to go? Is it going to move us farther apart?

>> What is the outcome or result I'm looking for here?

If in doubt, stay silent until a more powerful question comes into your head. Allow all of your sensory acuity to guide you. What do you feel, see, hear, and smell around you? You may then find yourself encouraging the person to take the lead by asking something like, "What's the most useful question to ask yourself here?" or even "Can you tell me the most useful question I could ask you?"

Making positive statements the norm

When we say to you, try really hard and don't think of a pink elephant, what happens? Yes, of course, you immediately think of a pink elephant, you just can't help it! Similarly, if you say to a child, "Don't eat those sweets before dinner," what happens? The child is compelled to *eat the sweets* — you've inadvertently issued a command.

The brain doesn't distinguish the negatives — it ignores the "don't" and thinks "do." Better to frame your message in the positive by saying to the child, "Dinner's coming, so save your appetite for just two minutes."

Figuring Out What You Want

Knowing what you want can be the greatest challenge, because it's a constantly moving feast. Sometimes you can get what you *think* you wanted and yet be disappointed, because in fact that wasn't what you really wanted at all! To figure out what you really want, ask yourself two questions:

>> What do I want?

>> What's that going to do for me?

What do I want?

If one great question comes out of NLP, it's "What do I want?"

TIP

Sometimes you don't know what you want, yet you know very clearly what you don't want. You have a good starting point. Make a list of the things you don't want, then take each in turn and ask yourself, "What's the opposite?" And then you'll be ready to check with yourself again, "So, what is it that I do want?"

REMEMBER

As you begin to articulate your answers, explore some details and allow yourself to dream a little. Imagine yourself in the future; fast forward your personal movie to a time when you have what you want and maybe more besides. Employ all your senses and ask yourself what that feels like, sounds like, and looks like. Are any smells or tastes associated with getting what you want? Check inside with yourself as to whether it seems right. Does it energize and excite you? If you feel anxious or exhausted, that's a clue that something's wrong. Possibly you're focusing on what you "should" or "ought" to be aiming for, which may be someone else's plan for you.

What's that going to do for me?

When you've thought about what you want, and some words and ideas have come to you, the next question is, "What's that going to do for me?" Perhaps you have a goal to achieve — to bid for a new business project, take up a new sport, or quit your job and go trekking in Nepal.

Ask yourself what achieving that aim is going to do for you. And ask the same question three times — really drill down until you hit some core values that make sense for you. Otherwise, you may be choosing to do things that take you meandering down side roads rather than staying on the path that will take you where you want to get to.

ANECDOTE

Emily is a successful management accountant in a large media business who has steadily risen to more senior roles over the 20 years since graduating from business school. As part of a business transformation program, she was given workplace coaching to support her changing responsibilities. When she first spoke

to her coach, her plan was to take on a more demanding leadership role in the merger of two business, perhaps moving her family abroad close to the corporate HQ.

However, Emily said that since the global pandemic, she had found the day-to-day grind of her corporate life less fulfilling. More working from home and long days of remote meetings had diluted the fun of the job and sapped her energy. She's someone who thrives on bouncing ideas off colleagues, traveling in person to different sites, and some friendly companionship in the office. She also wanted time for her children and own interests in rowing, photography, and the theater. Two years earlier, her father had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. She had been so busy that she hadn't really paid much heed to the fact that her family would need extra support as her father's health needs were putting extra demands on her mother. By slowing down and considering all aspects of her life, she realized that her own anxiety levels were constantly raised. "I was super organized from early morning 'til bedtime, cramming in activities, yet running on adrenaline. This wasn't sustainable."

During the coaching, Emily began assessing her own position in the projected new organizational structure and concluded that the changes did not fit with her personal values and preferred style of working. "I'd be working harder with less personal contact and more time on remote calls. Moving overseas would not give me any benefit." Instead of creating a new role for herself in the merger, she decided to negotiate a year's sabbatical with some consultancy options for her employer that would give her time and space to consider what she really wanted to do for the second part of her career. "I wanted to distance myself after 20 years in an accountancy role to get a feel for what I really wanted going forward. I also wanted to do the right thing to still be able to support my loyal team if needed and keep in touch. From the NLP coaching, I discovered that the coaching tools that I had experienced at work were really valuable to make better-informed decisions for the company and for me personally too."

Asking Questions to Help Make Decisions

You make decisions all the time: whether to go to your workplace or stay at home; what to have for lunch and supper; whether to accept an invitation to see a film; how much you should spend on a new electronic device or holiday; whether to host a party for your family or not.

Imagine that one sunny day you're happily working at your desk and receive a call from a recruiter: A new job is available, you're the person the company wants,

and, by the way, it means moving to a town by the sea 300 miles away. You weren't even considering a change, but you're flattered, and so you go and talk to the company. The deal looks pretty attractive and you think, *Wouldn't it feel good to be working near the sea in hot weather like this?* But a niggling little voice inside you is saying, *Is this the right thing to do? Are you sure?*

Should you go for it or remain doing what you know best? How can you decide? To guide yourself or someone else in the decision-making process, here are four key questions that you can ask:

>> What will happen if you do?

>> What will happen if you don't?

>> What won't happen if you do?

>> What won't happen if you don't?

TECHNICAL STUFF

These four questions are based on Cartesian logic, and you may find them referred to as *Cartesian coordinates*. All you need to remember is that they offer some powerful linguistic patterns that enable you to examine a subject from different angles.

We often talk clients through these questions, often related to major decisions: Shall I buy a new house, change career direction, have a baby, expand the company? The questions focus your attention and challenge your thinking. When you reach the last question, you may stop and think, *That's confusing.* Good. This reaction means that you're arriving at a breakthrough in your thinking.

If you make a change in one area of your life at the expense of another, chances are the change won't last. So, for example, if you move jobs but have to give up important interests or friendships where you currently live, the change isn't going to make you happy in the long term, and you probably won't stick with it. Don't take our word for it; try the questions out now in relation to something you're deliberating. You can see that the questions encourage you to check out your decision based on the impact on the whole of your environment, in a healthy way — what we call an *ecology* check (we talk more about this aspect in Chapter 4).

Challenging Limiting Beliefs

When someone's thinking is stopping them from achieving a much-sought-after goal, you can ask three simple questions in order to challenge such thinking. To help others (or yourself) overcome a limiting belief, ask the three questions set out in this section.

When asking the questions, give the person plenty of time to talk about an issue, and move on only when you sense that they've gotten it off their chest:

» **Question 1: What do you assume or believe about this issue that limits your ability to achieve your goal?**

Ask this question three times until you're sure that you've reached the heart of the matter — what NLP describes as a limiting belief. As you delve deeper, you may say, "That's right, and what else about this limits you?"

For example, the person may be thinking, "I'm not good enough" or "Nobody will let me" or "I just don't know how." When you hold a negative position like these, you stop yourself from doing what you need to do to achieve what you want.

» **Question 2: What would be a more empowering belief, one that's the positive opposite of the one holding you back?**

This question flips the limitation over to the positive side. For example, the positive opposites of the assumptions and beliefs above are "I am good enough," "Somebody will let me," and "I can find out how."

When you ask this second question, your colleague or client may become confused or even cross because it's challenging to answer. Yet, this question is critical to hold on to if you're going to effect a switch in perspective and come up with a more empowering belief that helps someone shift forward. So stick with it.

» **Question 3: If you knew that [your new freeing belief], what ideas do you now have to help you move toward your goal?**

This question completes the process. At this point, the person comes up with their own ideas on how to move forward: "Oh well, if I knew that I was good enough, I'd do X, Y and Z."

This questioning works by putting somebody into an "as if" way of thinking. If you act with the belief that something can happen, you can then find the behaviors to achieve the aim.

Kate coached a managing director who wanted to be successful in her business and yet was struggling to decide about having a child. Her limiting belief was, "It's not possible to be a good mother and a successful businesswoman at the same time." By working through the three questions, she evaluated the new opposite assumption that, "It's possible to be a good mother and a successful businesswoman at the same time."

By working in this "as if" framework — that is, operating as if it was possible to do both well — she opened up many ideas on how to run the company differently in order to pursue motherhood at the same time as being successful in business. Not only did she go on to have two healthy, well-adjusted children, but she also put in place more flexible policies that benefited the men as well as the women in the company.

Finding the Right Person for the Job: A Question of Motivation

Getting the right people in the right jobs at the right time can be a tricky business. Asking the right questions can help you to match people to the qualities needed to succeed in particular roles.

To get somebody lined up in the right job, ask yourself about the *personal qualities* needed to do that job well, as well as the *technical skills* involved. How is that person going to behave? The following questioning begins before you recruit:

- ❯❯ What are the essential criteria for performing this job well? Come up with about five key characteristics the person must possess, such as being a team builder or self-starter, able to follow clear processes, creative, open to learning, flexible, well-organized, intellectually agile, having a customer-focused mindset, and liking a challenge.
- ❯❯ Does the person need to be motivated to achieve results or troubleshoot the details of problems?
- ❯❯ Does the person need to be primarily self-motivated or get consensus from customers or a team?
- ❯❯ Does the style of working mean that the person must follow processes or does the person have freedom in how things get done?

The next four sections contain questions that you can ask at the interview to gain specific information on how people are likely to behave in a given context, as well as their technical skills to do the job you have in mind. The questions are based on the NLP meta programs that you can read about in Chapter 7.

The same questions apply when you check in with members of your team to see how things are going and what adjustments you can make to keep people motivated.

What do you want in your work?

This question enables you to match the criteria or hot buttons that you're looking for with those that are important for the individual. When you hear that someone wants lots of freedom and flexibility, they may do well in a creative environment but not if required to tightly project-manage an implementation of a new system. If they thrive on change, they may be good for a short-term contract but unlikely to stay more than a year or two unless you can provide new roles.

Why is that important?

Taking each of the applicant's criteria in turn, ask "Why is that important?" This question enables you to identify the direction in which the person is motivated: *away from* a problem or *toward* a solution. A person with an *away-from* preference may say that, "Salary is important so I don't have to worry about not being able to pay my mortgage." A person with a *toward* preference may say that, "Salary is important so I can buy my own home easily."

The clues to understanding people are in the language style they adopt, for example:

REMEMBER

>> If someone is motivated *toward*, you may hear words such as *attain*, *gain*, *achieve*, *get*, *include*.

>> If someone is motivated *away from*, you may hear words and phrases such as *avoid*, *exclude*, *recognize problems*.

How do you know that you've done a good job?

This question enables you to identify the source of a person's motivation.

If people are *internally focused* — that is, they pay more attention to what's happening for themselves than for other people — you can motivate them by using phrases such as "only you can decide," "you may want to consider," and "what do you think?"

If they're *externally focused* — that is, they need to be convinced by other people and accessing concrete facts and figures — you can motivate them by using phrases such as "others will notice," "the feedback you'll get," and "so and so says so."

If you're employing somebody in customer service, they need to value external approval instead of being internally focused. However, if you want to give a person

a project to do on their own, someone with a strong external focus is likely to struggle without regular approval from and involvement with others.

Why did you choose your current line of work?

This question is a great one to ask when you want to know whether someone is motivated by having options or by being told what to do. If somebody has an *options style*, you're going to hear words such as *opportunity*, *criteria*, *choice*, *unlimited possibilities*, and *variety*. On the other hand, if somebody has a strong *procedures style*, they're likely to give you a step-by-step response, the story of how they got into their current industry. You're likely to hear such people talking about processes and using phrases such as "the right way" and "tried and true."

TIP

Both styles can work in the same team quite happily together. To motivate your options people, build in as many choices as you can offer them. Get them to brainstorm new ways to do things. To motivate your procedures people, get them to focus on the necessary systems and processes to bring more structure and control to the team.

BLIND AUDITIONS

The topic of unconscious bias has come to the fore in those organizations that value diversity. Yet when most interviewers tend to sort for sameness (Chapter 7 tells you more about Meta-Programs such as sameness), they naturally recruit somebody like themselves. Eliminating your unconscious bias is very difficult, precisely because you don't realize you're adhering to it.

Over the years many orchestras have used blind auditions as a means of increasing their female membership. To prevent bias, the musicians perform behind a screen. According to an article by Curt Rice in the *Guardian* newspaper (October 14, 2013), this screening process has had a powerful impact. Researchers have determined that this step alone has made it 50 percent more likely that a woman will advance to the final audition phase. The screen has been demonstrated to be the source of a surge in the number of women being offered positions.

Although it may seem impractical to interview someone and remain ignorant of their gender, orchestras have demonstrated that it can be done. The interesting question is, how can this approach be applied more broadly? What kind of screen would be needed to create a truly balanced workplace in which people are recruited purely on the basis of their suitability for the job?

Checking In with Yourself

Getting into the habit of asking yourself questions can be very helpful if you want to stay on track with what you want to achieve. Here are some questions to consider each day:

>> What do I want?

>> What will that do for me?

>> What's important to me here?

>> What's working well?

>> How do I get in my own way?

>> What can be better?

>> What resources will support me?

REMEMBER If you accept the NLP presupposition that "There's no such thing as failure, only feedback," you won't be afraid of asking questions in case you get answers you'd prefer not to hear. Tune into the feedback you receive as you ask the right questions.

5

Integrating Your Learning

IN THIS PART . . .

Discover how to use NLP tools to model anybody who excels at anything from public speaking to housework to building relationships.

Harness the power of NLP at transition points in your life and work to make change easier.

Find out how to make light work of difficult times.

Chapter **19**

Dipping into Modeling

ere's a popular NLP story. A group of NLP master practitioners heads off to a remote location to study a shaman at work — a healer renowned for the results he achieves in extraordinary circumstances. Their mission is to look for "the difference that makes the difference," the essence of the shaman's skill, as they study his behavior while working with a sick patient.

A lot of apparent gibberish surrounds the shaman's work: incantations, dramatic posturing, and potions that characterize the external aspects of his work with a patient. After their period of observation, the NLP practitioners take the opportunity to question the shaman. One asks, "So at what point did the healing actually begin?" Anticipating an answer such as, "When I placed my hands on the wound," the practitioner is surprised to hear the answer, "When I went up to the mountain top several days ago and *set my intent.*"

You can take various messages from this story. One is in the power of setting your intent in any situation and noticing the effect that intent has on the results you get. Another is to recognize that what you see on the surface isn't always the whole story. As you read through this chapter, we invite you to set your own intent to find someone who excels at something you're interested in doing well and have yet to master, and to begin modeling that person by paying attention beyond the obvious external behaviors. We show you how to get started.

We don't expect you to become an expert NLP modeler just from reading this chapter — that takes many years of patient observation. Instead, we want you to have fun as you increase your powers of sensory acuity using NLP as we take you further on the journey. You never know to what great places that modeling can lead you, as several modelers we mention in this chapter have found out. You gain the most from modeling when you're already comfortable with the fundamental concepts of NLP that we explain in Part 1 and you'll also find becoming familiar with the logical levels model that we explain in Chapter 11 helpful.

Developing New Skills through Modeling

NLP originated from the founders' ability to model exceptional people — those considered to be geniuses in their field. Their pure modeling techniques involved painstaking information gathering without attempting to logically analyze their models until they could successfully replicate the patterns of the people they modeled and get equivalent results. Their aim was to reveal the unconscious patterns of the exemplars they studied — the information that their subjects would not be consciously aware of themselves. Their modeling work led to the creation of the many NLP tools and techniques that we are familiar with today and share in this book.

When most NLP Master Practitioner courses near conclusion, students are invited to engage in a *modeling* project that integrates their knowledge of the previous months and years of learning about NLP. The projects vary in their level of complexity and can range from modeling someone who has successfully created a substantial following on social media to a person who excels at running sales meetings. Modeling projects today often take a more straightforward and logical method of analyzing the success of the exemplars rather than the pure and unique NLP unconscious modeling undertaken by John Grinder and Richard Bandler back in the 1970s.

REMEMBER

NLP modeling is the ability to replicate fully the desirable competence of another person by getting to the unconscious behaviors beneath the skill and coding those behaviors into a model that you could teach to other people in order to replicate similar results.

You can acquire new skills by going to a class, reading books, listening to podcasts, downloading TED talks, investigating apps and AI resources, or watching video tutorials. These processes take time as you take the material, try it out, adapt it and incorporate it in your life. Modeling offers you a way to accelerate your skills in leaps and bounds. At its heart, NLP is about understanding what it is

to be human — how people do what they do — and from the outset the NLP developers adopted techniques to model human behavior in order to further their understanding and share it with others.

NLP attracts people who are interested in finding out about people. Your own modeling of others begins with a deep desire to learn and be curious about how other people function and get results. Richard Bandler and John Grinder created the original Milton and Meta Models thanks to their fascination with the communication skills of therapists. Other leaders in the NLP community — including Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, Todd Epstein, David Gordon, Stephen Gilligan, Tim Hallbom, Leslie Cameron-Bandler, Suzi Smith, and many others — applied modeling principles from the comprehensive study of fields such as leadership, genius, organizational development, creativity, health, wealth, and relationships.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Modeling involves an *exemplar* — someone who's competent in a particular field — and a *modeler* — who studies the exemplar. Through a process of study and observation, the modeler creates a *model*: an explanatory framework of how the exemplar functions.

TIP

To see what's really possible through various forms of modeling, you may like to take a look at some of the articles and resources at `www.nlpu.com` and Robert Dilts's work on the strategies of genius. Dilts studied a range of exemplars, many of whom were no longer alive — such as Mozart and Leonardo da Vinci. From his study of Walt Disney, Dilts created a model of creativity (known in NLP as the Disney Strategy) that explores Disney's ability to turn dreams into real projects.

When you begin modeling, you look to identify explicit underlying patterns in the way your exemplar operates, listen for their beliefs and values, and get curious about how they think and behave. Ultimately, the test of the model you then create is whether it stands alone so that you can teach it to someone else and they can then replicate the results your exemplar achieves.

REMEMBER

Like any field of intellectual inquiry, modeling involves wanting to solve a problem, answer a question, discover something new, and gather the information to present an informed and valuable hypothesis that stands up to scrutiny when tested. NLP literature abounds with interesting studies of modeling, including what you find in this chapter and much more besides. Modeling is the heart and soul of NLP. In trying to ascertain what makes one person excel where another struggles, the key question is, "What is the difference that makes the difference?"

TRY THIS

Have you ever looked at someone with a touch of admiration and asked yourself, "How do they do that?" "How do they manage to have such a good life?" or "I wonder if I could . . .?"

If so, that's good; you're ready to learn from someone else. However, to make things simple for yourself, take only a small aspect of their skill to model. Instead of looking at someone's whole life, identify something they excel at, such as how they negotiate a pay increase or how they speak to their children without getting cross. Begin by considering an area of your life in which you want to improve your skills or transform your experience, and ask yourself the following questions:

>> **What would I like more of in my life and work?** For example, do you want more fun, greater challenges, further technical qualifications, or a partner to share your life with? Do you want more holidays or a better-paid job?

>> **What would I like less of?** Perhaps you want to be less involved in office politics, not have to nag your teenage children so much to get their course-work done, or get rid of some household chores. Do you want to spend less time traveling on business?

>> **Who do I already know who's achieved a specific capability that I can learn from?** As you look around, you're likely to spot someone fairly close who has a skill that you've not been able to gain just yet.

Keep this information in mind as you choose your subjects for your personal modeling activity. Ideally, you should choose three different exemplars so that you develop a robust model.

ANECDOTE

Modeling reminds you of the power of having a range of exemplars in your life to show you the way in all kinds of activities. Kate had been attending yoga classes for many years, studying with many teachers, and just assumed that she was unable to stand on her head and achieve other more advanced postures because she lacked the natural flexibility of her more bendy teachers. When she positioned her mat alongside Yvonne, a woman of similar age, Kate found a better exemplar. By watching how Yvonne moved slowly and gracefully into the more difficult postures, Kate tuned into Yvonne's approach to health (both in and beyond the classes), noticed her belief that it was fine to take years if necessary to perfect her skill, watched the tiny postural adjustments, and realized that she too could master the headstand and feel relaxed in that posture.

This small success changed Kate's belief about what her body was able to learn. She paid more attention to the fine details of other moves, relaxed into developing her own practice, and let go of the belief that she had to compete with other people in the class.

TIP

If you want to become competent at a relatively simple behavioral skill, such as a dance move, find someone who's recently learned to do what you want to do as one of your exemplars. Such a person offers a good starting point because they're *consciously competent* — that is, still aware of the learning process they've been through and able to give you practical tips.

Recognizing that modeling is a natural human talent

Modeling doesn't have to be complicated. As a human, you're a natural modeler from the time you first look into your mother's eyes as a baby and recognize the power of a smile or gentle word, to when you follow in the footsteps of teenage friends by wearing similar clothes or copy work colleagues hooked on the latest technical gadget.

In meta-program terms (turn to Chapter 7 for more details), you're continually sorting for similarities and differences among the people you mix with, moving toward some behaviors and away from others, testing options, and looking for procedures to follow. You have extraordinary talents; walking on two legs, eating, speaking, and reading this book, and all these everyday behaviors require a multitude of unconscious microprocessing elements. When you come to model an exemplar, you unpack, recognize, and model the minute details of such processes in human behavior, thought, and feeling.

Think about when you discovered a new skill, such as learning the alphabet, riding a bike, driving a car, playing a sport, running a meeting, cooking a meal, choosing clothes that suit you, or managing your finances. Most likely, everything that you can now do well involved you learning from some kind of role model who showed you how it was done. You may not have been taught consciously, but you absorbed the knowledge by hanging out with someone who did that thing already, such as your big brother and his friends who rode two-wheeler bikes round the neighborhood while you followed behind with your training wheels.

Sometimes obvious *role models*, such as parents, friends, or people you spend time with, are less competent than you once believed them to be. What you learn by being with them may not increase your capability for the better, so you need to choose more suitable role models who demonstrate the excellence you seek. For example, if your mother believed she was unable to make a meal without burning it, you may have modeled her habit of buying prepared meals to pop in the microwave. Likewise, if your father was unreliable with money, wasting every last penny, you may have unconsciously modeled his habit of being permanently overdrawn at the bank. The parenting model demonstrated by your parents may have been less than helpful, and thus, you need to find a new one to save you repeating their mistakes. As you pick your own new *exemplars*, choose the best ones to whom you can realistically gain access.

In Chapter 4, we look at well-formed outcomes and the resources you need to achieve your goals. Finding appropriate exemplars whom you can model can be a valuable way of accelerating your ability to reach your outcome. For example, if your goal is to learn hang-gliding but you're held back by your fear of heights,

find three people who have the capability to hang-glide in spite of their fears. By modeling these exemplars, you too may build your confidence.

Getting to a deeper structure

NLP modeling seeks to bring the intangible to the surface. The model you create of the other person seeks to extract their essential thought processes and strategies in a certain context, yet it will always be a partial description of the whole complexity of that human being. Just like when you visit the site of an historical ruin and a miniature model clarifies the pile of dusty rubble and broken mosaics in front of you, an NLP model seeks to get beneath the skin of a human being who excels in a particular field to identify the essence of what's going on inside.

In Chapter 2, we introduce you to the essential NLP presupposition that "the map is not the territory." Like all humans, you have your mental maps, and modeling seeks to understand those maps. NLP modeling enables you to find the deep structure underlying a successful person's behavior, so that you can then make your processing explicit to other people and allow them to get the opportunity to replicate the exemplar's successes. Modeling attempts to make you conscious of what's happening at a deeper, unconscious level.

NLP distinguishes the deep structure of your experience from the surface structure of your language. You can find more on this subject in Chapter 15.

Even within NLP, no agreement exists on the best way to dig down to the deeper structure through modeling, and as you explore modeling in more depth, you find many approaches based on the preference of the modeler. In this way, much of modeling is done on an intuitive basis rather than by a well-documented and logical approach.

You glean much information from watching and listening to the exemplar in action, of course, but if you don't have easy access to your subject, you also discover plenty from documents and recordings. TED talks and YouTube postings offer many exemplars on powerful presenting and self-confidence in communication.

Assume that what you see and hear on the surface in terms of someone's behavior and words is only part of the story. Be patient and observe what may be really going on for that person in terms of assumptions, beliefs, and values.

If you're modeling an entrepreneur, for example, you may notice the apparent relaxed and laid-back approach that someone like Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group exudes. What you may not understand so easily is how to generate the drive to create something from nothing, the enduring motivation, or the

mental strategies to negotiate a complicated deal. When you take two other exemplars of successful entrepreneurs and look at how they operate, you can decide whether an attribute such as "laid-back" is an essential factor for success or just a characteristic of one exemplar.

Discovering Modeling Case Studies

Some of the modeling undertaken by NLP leaders involves incredible patience as they come to understand complex skills and build the detailed behavioral maps that benefit others. Many skills are made up of subsets of other skills. For example, an experienced therapist can react appropriately in highly sensitive situations, and a business leader can make successful decisions under pressure while maintaining rapport with a network of stakeholders. Great salespeople do much more than get a contract signed. In this section, we take a look at some informative case studies.

The reluctant exemplar

One of the biggest challenges when modeling an expert is that experts aren't consciously aware of what they do: They're *unconsciously competent*. Hence, you need to spend time just being with them. The problem can be compounded when your exemplar isn't interested in being modeled or don't want any intrusion into their work. Penny Tompkins and James Lawley faced this dilemma when they set out to model New Zealand therapist David Grove, originator of Clean Language (check out Chapter 18 for more details).

Grove's early work was in the area of trauma, and he produced exceptional results working with a client base that included Vietnam War veterans and adults who'd suffered severe childhood abuse. From the 1980s until his death in 2008, his work went through a number of innovations covering four major themes: Clean Language, Metaphor, Clean Space, and Emergent Knowledge.

Says Penny, "We realized how valuable David's ideas would be outside the therapeutic field, yet there was nothing written about that. At first, David was reluctant to be modeled."

When Penny approached him with the idea of being an exemplar, he replied, "I don't care what you do, but I don't want you to ask me any questions. I don't want to know you're in the room." Luckily, this restriction didn't alter Penny and James's determination to go ahead with the project. The only question was, how to do it.

One of the mysteries of NLP is the lack of description about how the originators, Bandler and Grinder, modeled the first experts from which NLP was born. To figure this problem out for themselves, Penny and James took the first five books that were the result of the modeling of Bandler, Grinder, and others and "reverse engineered" what they most likely did to arrive at these models. Through trial and error, Penny and James created their own model for modeling for which David Grove was to be the first exemplar.

Thus began a painstaking period while they tried to figure out how to model David when he was in the UK only periodically. The project took them four years and involved attending David's therapeutic retreats as participants, getting hold of recordings of David's early work, and spending hours and hours going through transcripts of sessions. As a result of their modeling, Penny and James developed *Symbolic Modeling*, an approach that enhances an NLP practitioner's ability to work with people's metaphors at the symbolic level. (Flip to Chapter 18 for more on Clean Language and Penny and James's work.)

Their work resulted in the influential book, *Metaphors in Mind* (Developing Company Press, 2000). Over the years, David Grove's attitude changed, and in the foreword to their book, he praised "Penny's tenacious 'won't take no for an answer' style." He went on to say, "My life continues to be enriched by your ongoing interactions."

MEETING HER MATCH ON THE RIVER

ANECDOTE

Gillian Burn, a keen recreational rower, focused her modeling project on understanding how to achieve a positive inner state in order to row effectively for optimal performance. She chose three exemplars: the club rowing coach; the most improved female rower; and Olympic rower Greg Searle. Her project culminated in presenting her research to fellow master NLP practitioners at the end of their course.

Her presentation began by lining up groups of people as if they were in a rowing boat. She then taught them a combination of strategies involving the senses — what they would see, feel, and hear — and their breathing, posture, and movement when in the best state to compete. She incorporated the TOTE model — test, operate, test, exit, described fully in Chapter 12 — into the learning process. The test was whether the rowers were still, every muscle poised for action, and maintaining strong inner smiles. If so, they were ready; if not, they had to refocus and repeat a visual, auditory, and kinesthetic process.

From modeling the rowers, Gillian was able to identify some common themes to apply to everyday life; to enable the creation of an appropriate inner state, a positive feeling, and a belief that you can achieve what you want with the right preparation, inner thoughts, and self-confidence.

In addition, however, Gillian reaped an extra and very special unexpected benefit from interviewing the club coach in depth and discovering much more about his personality. "Through the modeling process and subsequent conversations, we became exceptionally good friends and now share our life together and the joys of bringing up our young family," says Gillian. "Who knows what opportunities people can find if they give themselves the time to listen and find out about another person without any prejudice or barriers or even thinking they're trying to find a partner. It was in not looking for a partner, when John and I got together: It was the result of a deep conversation about a common interest."

The rainmakers' dance

As someone with a 24-year career in sales management, Rob Biggin was fascinated by senior managers who excel at creating sales opportunities and yet have had no formal sales training — people known as "rainmakers." He invited several of his exemplars to teach him how they sell and learned much that informed his training programs in service organizations.

Rob was intrigued by the words delivered by his first exemplar:

> The chap told me that when he goes into a sales meeting with a prospect, he has in mind that he may well be going on holiday with this person in the future. [In fact, the exemplar was about to go on holiday with a client.] This frames how he handles the meeting and treats the person with the utmost interest because he wants to get to know them well. This was definitely not something I could have predicted, and yet I saw that it made a huge difference in his attitude towards a prospect.

Rob suggested to delegates in his courses that they approach every meeting by setting their intent to be very interested in the client, and he shares the story of the successful manager who behaves "as if" they're going on holiday with that person in the future.

Rob also tried a simple, fun exercise based on the sameness and difference meta program, and found that, when he gave all his exemplars a set of coins to sort, they all looked for "sameness" and did the same thing in business — identifying

the things they had in common with their prospects. (See Chapter 7 for more on meta programs.) They very quickly looked for ways in which to connect and build rapport, as in "I see we both have two sons" or "I like to read *The Economist* too."

As a result of his modeling work, Rob developed his training programs and coaching of sales professionals to hone their business-generation skills.

Key Stages in Modeling

We're confident that you can identify someone in your life who has demonstrated specific skills that you'd like to have at your disposal. In this section, we lead you through a generic process of simple modeling so that you can take on aspects of your exemplar's skills.

The key stages are as follows:

1. **Knowing your outcome.**
2. **Identifying your exemplar.**
3. **Finding a modeling method you can work with.**
4. **Gathering your data.**
5. **Building your model.**
6. **Testing the prototype.**
7. **Refining for simplicity.**

We describe these steps in the following sections to give you some tips on how to get started on your own modeling project.

Knowing your modeling outcome

NLP takes you from being stuck in a problem to achieving outcomes. When you know your outcome in any scenario, you focus your attention on what you want, for example, "I want to be a better dad" or "I'd like to appear confident when I go speed dating." Being specific about the capability that you want to model is helpful — for example, "playing with my children when I come home from work" or "taking a keen interest in a person when I meet them." This focus is especially useful in modeling to help you know when to stop because you recognize that you've achieved your outcome. You always learn more when you practice what you discover about, and from, your exemplar. This attention to the

outcome is much more important than being overly precious about your method-ology at this stage in your learning.

TRY THIS

Create a well-formed modeling outcome by going through all the steps we outline in Chapter 4. You may be modeling as part of an NLP training course or to develop your own NLP knowledge, to be better at your job, develop a skill such as a new language or to grow your business.

Identifying your exemplar

When choosing an exemplar, you're looking for one and often several examples of people who do precisely what you'd like to do well in the same or similar context. Your exemplars may well have reached the stage of being unconsciously compe-tent at whatever they do well: They're so skilled at what they do that they find it hard to "unpack" the details when others ask for advice. They simply say, "I just do it," so you need to do some detective work to retrieve the information. For example, for your exemplar, you may choose someone who's successful at the following:

>> Building an active online community

>> Coaching clients through difficult life transitions

>> Creating a warm and welcoming home environment

>> Displaying an aptitude for learning new languages

>> Finishing DIY projects

>> Formatting clear documents

>> Franchising businesses

>> Raising money for charity

>> Staying healthy while looking after others

TIP

Keep your modeling simple at first: The more clearly defined the skill that you want to replicate and the more accessible your exemplar, the easier you are going to find your task. Trying to model Picasso or a very private celebrity is going to be extremely tough, even though some keen NLP modelers have done exceptional work on modeling public figures.

Consider one specific desired behavior or skill the exemplar demonstrates that you want to replicate. You don't want or need to capture all the person's behaviors.

You're surrounded by people who can do things that you can't do so well. Often somebody in your close network has valuable expertise that you can tap into, even within your family. While attending her NLP Master Practitioner program, Rachel was chosen as an exemplar for five separate modeling projects by fellow students who were keen to model different aspects of her approach to business and health. They were intrigued by how she'd set up a successful business as well as changing her career at various points from a chef to an events manager to become an independent health and fitness guru and author with a strong brand and exuberant personality. Some were interested in specific behavior changes such as her success in giving up smoking and weight loss.

"It was actually humbling to be chosen by my peers as an exemplar. Just the fact of being modeled made me pay closer attention to things that I now take for granted in how I carry out my business," she says. The act of modeling has potential benefits for the exemplars too, because you can make people consciously aware of their experience and the changes they may make.

Finding a modeling method you can work with

Modeling is about finding out, at a deep level, how exemplars experience their world such that it enables them to do what they do so successfully, and about creating an understanding of how they're thinking, feeling, and behaving in any one moment. You're trying to get inside someone's head and need to acquire the most appropriate tool for the job. Inevitably, the quality of the information-gathering tool that you adopt has a crucial effect on the process.

This aspect raises the fundamental chicken and egg question in modeling. Do you create the structure for your model first or does that develop later? Our view is that having some framework or hypothesis as a beginner in modeling is helpful, as is letting go of the model if appropriate. For this reason, Robert Dilts's clear and practical logical levels structure (which we describe in Chapter 11) is a popular starting point for both information gathering and analysis of your exemplars.

Here are some initial points to consider about each of your exemplars at the different levels:

- **Environment:** Where, when, and with whom do they spend their time?

- **Behavior:** What do they do? What are their habits and strategies?

- **Capabilities:** What skills do they have?

- **Beliefs and values:** What do they believe to be true? What is important to them?

>> **Identity:** What is their sense of themselves? Who are they in this context?

>> **Purpose:** What is their sense of purpose and connection to how they fit into the bigger picture?

REMEMBER

You're human, so you come to modeling with your own knowledge and precon-ceived ideas. Your model itself acts as a filter on what information you observe and collect.

Gathering your data

To prevent yourself getting overwhelmed by data, we suggest that you begin with a mix of two information-gathering approaches:

>> **Unconscious uptake:** In this approach, you hang out with your exemplar as much as you can so that you can intuitively get a sense of how the person operates. Arrive with no fixed agenda other than to emulate their breathing and physiology and get a sense of what being in their shoes is like. Ideally, you start without a model in your head and move into the second perceptual position in which you have deep rapport with your subject. Notice what you see, hear, and feel. Check out Chapter 6 for more on rapport and understand-ing other points of view.

>> **Analytical information gathering:** In this approach, you can structure your data collection around tools such as the logical levels explained in Chapter 11. This process is an effective way of building information, especially when you have limited time and only brief access to your exemplar.

The NLP tools and techniques that we outline throughout this book can assist you in developing your information gathering. Your analysis of data and modeling is an opportunity to refresh your knowledge and hone your skills. Here's how:

>> **Assumptions or presuppositions:** From what assumptions does your subject operate? See Chapter 2 for more details.

>> **Beliefs and values:** What beliefs do you notice in your subject — what are their key drivers? Chapter 3 helps you here.

>> **Emotional-state management:** What can you discover about your exem-plar's ability to manage their emotional state, a topic we describe in Chapter 9?

>> **Metaphors and stories:** What stories does your exemplar tell or respond to? Chapter 17 guides you in this area.

- » **Meta programs:** Can you spot meta programs in the person's language — for example, detail versus global, toward and away from, options and procedures, internal and external focus? Chapter 7 has more about meta programs.

- » **Perceptual positions:** Does your exemplar take the different perceptual positions explored in Chapter 6? Try stepping into three or four perspectives yourself as the modeler.

- » **Strategies:** Can you identify the strategies your subject adopts and code them as we explain in Chapter 12?

- » **Time:** What is this person's sense of time, as explained by timeline work in Chapter 13? Do they operate in the moment or are they good at planning?

- » **Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic predicates:** What do the language patterns tell you about how this person communicates in this particular context? We discuss these items in Chapter 5.

TIP

Your exemplar is going to be good at some things that you're already competent at yourself. Save your time and energy by concentrating your investigation on areas that are most unfamiliar to you.

Building your model

When you've gathered your data, you have all you need to build a model that demonstrates the patterns you uncover in your exemplar. This structure is the coherent description of the essential patterns and demonstrates to other people what they need to copy in their attempts to get the same results as your exemplar.

You can take an existing framework, such as the logical levels model, and be willing to build the model in your own way, adding your unique knowledge to it just as the modelers did in the earlier section "Discovering Modeling Case Studies."

ANECDOTE

When Kate wrote her career and resilience guide, *Live Life. Love Work* (Wiley, 2010), she was curious about the lessons to be gained from numerous professionals regarding times when they achieved a flow state of contentment with their lives. When she first began modeling, she built a framework to focus her attention and questioning on some core principles about how professionals steer a course in their lives. She developed an acronym that she thought would be memorable for her readers.

However, as she began writing up the research and using the approach within her own coaching practice, she realized that if she kept to her precious model, the result would be contrived. So she simplified the model to a visual with four parts that encompassed what she heard in her interviews. This visual became a clearer, more valuable framework for her readers to follow, draw, and remember.

Testing the prototype

When you have your model, be willing to test and continuously improve upon it. The NLP TOTE model encourages you to test, operate, test, exit to trial your prototype (see Chapter 12 for more information). The best way to test your prototype is to teach the model to others and see how it works. Do they get the same results?

ANECDOTE

As NLP-trained coaches, Kate and her colleague Rob were invited into a global IT corporation to model Robin, an internal professional development manager, at work and observe how he guided his large team of consultants to take ownership of their careers. Robin was interested in NLP and knew that he was extremely successful at what he did. He recognized aspects of his work and yet found that fully documenting what he did and how he did it was difficult.

As a result of modeling Robin at work, Kate and Rob were able to capture the essence of Robin's approach. Together, the trio converted Robin's work into a career coaching model and taught his approach to other senior managers in the organization. Kate and Rob made Robin's original model more robust by incorporating fundamental NLP concepts such as using rapport building to improve business relationships, perceptual positions to enhance personal brand development, and timelines and logical levels in order to capture information about the career journey. In this way, the modeler supported the exemplar to become even more capable, as often happens.

As the training program became popular, those attending realized that they now had a simple, lifelong methodology to manage their own careers as well as those of the people who worked for them. What was particularly powerful about Robin's approach was his use of the metaphor of surfing and choosing a career wave with real-life stories to get the message across to fellow managers in a way that was creative and inspirational. However, other people didn't have to tell the same stories; room was left for them to tell their own. Each of the managers attending the training took the essential structure of the model and applied it in their own way. The key proof of the model was that they all got results. Robin documented his approach in his book *WaveMaker Career Secrets* (self-published, 2018) as a lasting legacy of his work.

Refining for simplicity

The modeler must decide which elements of the exemplar's behavior are an essential part of the model and which are just an interesting piece of information. Does the golfer's prematch ritual make the difference to the winning shot? You need to isolate at least three occasions when the desired behavior is present, so that you can spot common patterns between them. This approach may mean choosing at least three exemplars, or if you want one person's particular way of doing something, at least three separate instances.

You have to be willing to stay for longer than usual in the space of "not knowing," absorbing the details you've gathered, and then to "chunk up" to the essential elements of what needs to be your model. (You can read more about chunking in Chapter 16.) When you have your model, try it on for size to work out which aspects are essential and which you can safely leave out. You also need to check that someone else's model fits with your values and whether you may need to do some work on your own beliefs. Here, you could enlist the support of an NLP coach if you're developing a model to make changes in your own life.

Fran Burgess, a highly respected NLP trainer and modeler, suggests that writing a book resembles the modeling process. Armed with all the data, you're left with the question of how to sort it, and the structure has to emerge. Modelers, like writers, need to be willing to delve into a tremendous amount of detail to find the apparent simplicity of what finally emerges in their work.

Writers work in their own unique way and the actual writing part — putting words to paper — is a tiny part of the overall publication process. Yet many people don't realize this fact when they attempt to model an author and extract the essential core elements of the model. When Kate writes books, she starts with gathering masses of information, reading other books on and around the subject, research-ing online, going to events, interviewing people, and creating sketches of ideas and visual computer maps that break down the structure of chapters, before get-ting into a project plan with dates and deliverables. The neat, finished product often belies the related volume of books, paperwork, and computer files behind the scenes.

When Romilla writes, she does some things in the same way as Kate, going out and meeting people and brainstorming ideas visually, but she does others in a very different way. She likes to listen to audio content and prefers to record con-versations, absorbing the information before she writes. Both of us have our antennae tuned for months and plenty of unconscious processing goes on when a book is in our heads.

Our methods for getting a book to completion are quite different, though. Kate's more likely to outline her ideas and illustrate them with stories. Romilla drops her ideas into her visual maps on the computer, using the same software as Kate, yet with the facility to see ideas as floating topics rather than connected to a central idea, because this approach gives her the flexibility to slot headings together as she expands on them. She uses a voice-capture program to "engage with and talk to" her imaginary audience. She learned this process from her good friend, Rintu. When she started by typing, completing her work took ages because she felt com-pelled to edit as she went along. Now she is a much faster "writer," and her lan-guage is more natural.

From our two exemplars, you could create a model that would include some core stages for how to write a book chapter, although differences do exist between the exemplars. A description of the core model (in other words, the bits that are the same) that you might find when modeling Kate and Romilla would look like this:

1. **Gather background information — research online, meet people, read or listen to audio and video content.**
2. **Create a visual map of ideas.**
3. **Draft text in Microsoft Word.**
4. **Revise text.**
5. **Deliver computer files to editorial deadline (90 per cent of the time!).**

As you spend more time with the exemplars, you're likely to need to take one specific aspect of their process and break that into subprocesses and dwell on the details for a while. You might also begin to notice things not made explicit, such as strategies for mulling over ideas and the part that less obvious activities such as walking and meditation play in gaining clarity of thought. You might also notice the fact that one writer also scribbles lots of long, hand-written notes in a café, while another records ideas into a tape recorder as part of their drafting process. If you were to model a third writer, you may notice their habit of spending a whole morning rearranging one page of text with infinite patience at the editing stage. Each writer works in their own way; the test is whether the model takes you to the desired end result of delivering an acceptable manuscript on time.

A book may be in an author's head for many years before it reaches publication. As an expert in modeling, Fran Burgess suggests that modelers need incredible patience. She worked with modelers for over ten years to identify the many structures behind the process of modeling. Incidentally, she also recognized that every modeler she met finds being modeled themselves using any modeling methodology other than their own very difficult. "They don't respond to it. Modelers tend to live their model and they are wedded to it," she says. Your mental models are central to your identity.

REMEMBER

The "difference that makes the difference" is unlikely to be immediately visible. Great modelers have tremendous patience and boundless curiosity. Stay curious!

Chapter **20**

Making Change Easier

"Nothing endures but change" is an oft-quoted truism. Change can happen in one of two ways:

» You can initiate and plan for change. This type of change can be something relatively minor such as buying a new car or getting a new kitchen, or it can be life-changing — for example, when you decide to get married, move house, have kids, or change jobs; in these cases, you feel as if you have some control, although external agencies can throw a wrench in the works and leave you feeling helpless and stressed.

» You can have change imposed on you, for example by failure of your business venture or a reduction in force, through events such as an unexpected pregnancy or the loss of a loved one, or as happened the global COVID-19 pandemic. Change is harder to accept when you feel as if you're the victim or when it wasn't how you expected life to turn out.

The NLP approach is that no single correct map of change exists at any one time. To survive and thrive, you need to acknowledge and embrace the fact that change is happening and put strategies in place to work with change rather than against it.

Because NLP is about how people think and behave, this chapter focuses on the *people aspect* of change and not on the project management of change in the workplace. We aim to show you how to deal with change in a way that allows you to maintain your equilibrium through choppy times, whether you initiate the change or a change is imposed on you. Should you come across someone for whom change isn't going as smoothly as they'd like, we hope the insights you gain here enable you to ease their way a little. You could do so by simply listening sympathetically, lending a helping hand, or just explaining what they're experiencing.

To do all this, we pull together NLP tools and techniques from the rest of the book to illustrate how you can apply NLP to the changes that happen in your everyday life, be they relatively small or life-changing and whether they're created by you or other people. For example, think about the presupposition, "if what you're doing isn't working, do something different" (Chapter 2 covers NLP presuppositions in more detail). Change is all about doing something different when what you're already doing isn't working.

The premise in writing this chapter is that whatever the change, you can handle it humanely and compassionately — for example, when dealing with layoffs in a corporation. This chapter is also about enabling you to make change easier for yourself by understanding what you experience. Instead of beating yourself up, if you think you could have done better at something, you can show yourself some kindness and focus on what you've done well.

As you read through this chapter, capture a record of what you're going through or how you're anticipating change, and see how the change can be made easier by applying specific NLP techniques.

Finding Clarity and Direction

Knowing where you want to go is crucial. Without clear direction, you can end up expending a lot of energy chasing what you don't want and waste a lot of time achieving nothing. For maximum results, you need to be sure about exactly what outcome you want from the change you choose to create. For example:

- » I want to weigh 140 pounds by September 30 this year.
- » Our attrition rate is 27 percent, and we want to reduce that to 15 percent.
- » We want to outsource our services to a trusted supplier.
- » I want my wedding day to be perfect.

Chapter 4 takes you through the process of gaining clarity about your goals and uncovering hidden fears. The examples we use in Chapter 4 are aimed, primarily, at people who want to create goals in their personal life using the NLP well-formed outcome approach. This useful process is also great, however, for change involving a team or a work department.

Imagine that you're experiencing change in your work life. You're a manager who needs to keep a change process on track while making sure that your staff are engaged and motivated (so that productivity loss is kept to a minimum). You also need to ensure that you can keep yourself upbeat and healthy. The big problem when change like this happens in an organization is that people feel powerless. Typically, organizations rush through massive changes without due consideration for the impact on people. Perceiving that they have no control leads to employees feeling stressed and lacking in motivation. Very little room for flexibility exists in big-change objectives set by top management. However, the people who have to implement the change can gain some sense of control and remain engaged in the process if they can make decisions on how to enact the steps involved. Teams and individuals can apply the goal-setting techniques described in Chapter 4 and thus experience less stress.

TRY THIS

Take some time out to connect with your team and brainstorm any impending changes (and *team* in this sense can be your family or a larger social group). This process is a good way for the whole team to identify each other's concerns with regard to the change. If the team is too big to fit around a table, break it into several groups and allocate one point to each group. The team then comes together and each group talks about what it discussed, thus creating a range of valuable insights.

Understanding the Structure of Change

To make change easier to understand, we offer two models to illustrate what you may be experiencing and what you may allow for when you find that change is making you feel uncomfortable or making you behave in a way that's out of character. Change is the external event that's taking place, yet the transition you go through is the essential internal emotional processing.

REMEMBER

Changes do not happen on a direct path from A to B. There will be twists, turns, setbacks, and backpedaling on the way. All changes involve a letting go of the old order before transitioning to the new one.

The Kübler-Ross grief cycle

Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote about the Five Stages of Grief in her famous book, *On Death and Dying* (Scribner, 2019). Although originally designed to deal with death, her model is useful in helping to understand change because most change involves some kind of mourning of the old and familiar life. (Even in leaving an unsuitable relationship, there will be some sadness about shattered hopes and dreams.)

You don't come across this model in standard NLP courses. However, people may be familiar with the Kübler-Ross Five Stages of Grief as applied specifically to corporate change. The reason we include it here is to pace anyone who doesn't know much NLP but who has used this model for organizational change, as a lead-in to applying NLP to change.

When change strikes, people try to maintain the status quo because it's secure and stable. When a change occurs in the status quo of any system, even when it's expected, people can experience the different stages shown in Figure 20-1. This model can forewarn and forearm you so that you can deal with change more effectively and help other people in the organization manage change better. Understanding what you're going through helps you to manage yourself by managing your emotional state, so Table 20-1 examines these stages further. It offers ways of helping you to behave more resourcefully by creating rapport with other people through an awareness of how change is affecting them.

0. Status quo
1. Shock, anger, freeze
2. Denial
3. Self-awareness
4. Acceptance
5. Experiment
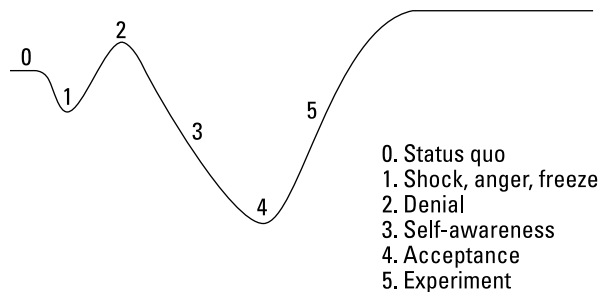
FIGURE 20-1:
The change curve.

When involved in corporate change, the manager's job is to keep the dip of the curve as low as possible and to keep the time frame from point 1 (the start of experiencing change) to point 5 (a new status quo begins to emerge) as short as possible, because that gets people back into full performance mode as soon as possible.

TABLE 20-1

The Stages of Grief in the Change Curve for Change in the Workplace

Stages in the Change Curve	How People May React	What Actions Help
1. Shock and anger	People may procrastinate when they experience shock. Feelings of shock and anger can be fleeting or last for a long time, depending on how resilient people are. People feel trapped and respond fearfully.	Allow people to let off steam and reassure them that the change is temporary and things are going to get better. *Stress that the change is not personal.* Subtly work to help people change their map of the world because people react based on their existing map and the strength of their reaction depends on what their map tells them to do or how to react.
2. Denial	People may have a false perception about their ability to cope. They may think they can handle things. They think everyone else is to blame. People can stay locked in this stage and become dinosaurs who can't cope with change, which can result in their losing their job or being sidelined.	Coaching helps. The tool is to give feedback, because without feedback, people don't realize that they're in denial and deluding themselves.
3. Self-awareness	People feel worse as they realize their toolkit of skills and knowledge isn't good enough to cope with the change. They go into survival mode. The state of feeling bad and inadequate can spill into other areas of people's lives.	Here, people need support and to know where they are on the curve and why they're feeling bad. People feeling like this need to tell their spouse, colleagues, and manager and ask for leeway to be grumpy and scared. They need to be given permission to feel bad and behave unresourcefully.
4. Acceptance	People start to take personal responsibility for dealing with change as they realize they have finally stopped resisting the change. People's perception of their abilities is incorrect because they feel useless.	This stage is where people are shown how other people coped with change by giving them case studies, coaching, and exemplars to model.
5. Experiment	This stage is the learning and integrating of new tools, so people start modeling others to see how they deal with change. They feel more capable and competent.	Training people to acquire new skills and give them room to make mistakes. At this stage, managers must have done sufficient risk analysis and contingency planning, so that mistakes aren't detrimental to the company. Risk management is necessary at this point so that mistakes can be handled and dealt with appropriately. A blame culture only kicks people back to stage 2.

As you emerge from the change, *integration* then follows. You settle into the new way of doing things and are more flexible because you've had to learn to cope with a new environment. Your perception of your own competence is more positive and is likely to be measured more accurately. The change can be incorporated into the identity of the company by constantly referring back to it until it becomes unconscious.

REMEMBER

People react differently to change. Each person spends different lengths of time at each stage and each person has to be dealt with differently by team-mates and the manager. A manager's role, therefore, needs to change as they deal with the different stages that different people are at.

REMEMBER

When you're leading or facilitating a team, experiencing the team's emotions is quite normal. For this reason, managers can feel as though they're on a roller-coaster of frustration, fear, and anxiety as they experience the different phases themselves. So they may need coaching, mentoring, being taken out for a beer, or whatever else will help them gain space and perspective.

TIP

When people are under stress, their behavior may need to be excused. Before reacting to someone, adopt the second position to, metaphorically, "walk in that person's shoes" to get a better understanding of how they're feeling. This process gives you the ability to move up and take the bird's-eye view when "trouble's on the ground." Chapter 6 on rapport shows you how to use perceptual positions and the meta-mirror to explore other people's behaviors and motivations, which in turn will give you the opportunity to adapt how you communicate and respond to create win–win results. Check out presuppositions in Chapter 2 relating to failure/feedback, communication, and behavior.

Applying the NLP logical levels

The NLP logical levels model is another powerful way to think about change by breaking it down as a model into different categories of information. (Turn to Chapter 11 for more on logical levels, which are sometimes known as neurological levels.)

As you begin to consider the kind of changes that you experience, you find that logical levels can help you to find a route forward in confusing times. To do this, having alignment through all the logical levels of identity, belief and values, capabilities and skills, behavior, and environment is particularly important, because having an incongruity at one or more levels stops the desired result from happening. This model can be as useful when experiencing personal change as for understanding corporate change. The model's key value is that it provides a structured approach to understanding what's happening. It enables people to actively choose how they want to think and feel about the change and then how they're going to behave as a result of these thoughts.

In whichever case, changing at the lower levels of the diagram (refer to Figure 11-1 in Chapter 11) is easier than at the higher levels. So, for example, a company may find making changes to the building (environment), such as painting the walls a brighter color, is easier than changing the culture or creating a new identity for itself. Changes like these at a higher level have an impact on people below them; changes at lower levels can impact people above, but this isn't a given.

ANECDOTE

Jas, a very bright, well-educated thirty-something, booked herself on a Relationship Wizardry coaching course because, although she'd had a series of relationships, she just couldn't settle into a permanent partnership. Jas is the daughter of very successful parents, and as a result of the coaching, she realized that she'd modeled herself on her strong, very independent mother. Unfortunately, her identity as a strong, independent woman prevented her from accepting gifts, help, or advice from people, and this independence affected all areas of her life. She admitted that some of her relationship problems were because she found it hard to accept love and would push her partner away (behavior) before he became too close emotionally. She also found herself in relationships with men who weren't on a par with her intellectually. Jas also realized that she had some self-esteem issues (beliefs) because she didn't feel she measured up to the success her mother had achieved by the time she was Jas's age, and she didn't feel she deserved a successful, dynamic man like her father.

Romilla helped Jas to "design" her ideal relationship using the well-formed outcome process (see Chapter 4). One of the first steps Jas incorporated was to change the environment where she met people. She joined groups in which she was more likely to meet people with whom she had interests in common. Before the coaching, the misalignment through Jas's logical levels stopped her attaining her goal of a long-term relationship.

Creating alignment in logical levels

Alignment in any venture makes things flow more smoothly and helps you to attain your target more quickly. If you have alignment through all your logical levels (see Chapter 11), you're going to find success easy.

ANECDOTE

Elaine is 45, married with young children, and climbing her chosen career ladder in the financial services industry. She's extremely bright and very ambitious (one aspect of identity). She's also passionate about women understanding how to attain financial security (values) and believes in educating women to this end, because she "knows" (belief) that every woman has the right to financial independence.

Elaine has a string of letters after her name (capabilities and skills) but is striving to gain more qualifications. This aim is completely congruent with the direction in

which she's taking her business, and the way she acts and talks about women's finance (behavior) engenders complete trust. She has a lovely office at home (environment) where she can keep an eye on her children. When she needs to think, she goes into the garden for a spot of meditation. Because all the areas related to her business are aligned, she's making good progress.

ANECDOTE

Although this next anecdote is an example of what Brian experienced when his wife died, it can apply to anyone who undergoes loss: of a marriage when a separation occurs or the loss of a job as a result of illness, redundancy, sacking, or retirement.

Brian, an accountant, and Alicia had been married for almost 30 years. The first couple of weeks after Alicia died were tied up with making the funeral arrangements, and Brian functioned on autopilot, but then he went through a period of huge change:

>> **Environment:** Brian found that he was rattling around their bedroom after he took Alicia's clothes to the charity shop. A bed that had been comfortable for two felt very big, and the king-size quilt was too heavy.

Obviously, depending on the loss, different aspects apply when adjusting to or creating a new environment for a new life.

>> **Behavior:** Brian had always been very playful, and people enjoyed his company because he was such fun. In fact, Alicia would tease him for being an outrageous flirt. Some months after Alicia died and life began to stabilize, Brian realized that his sense of humor had started to return. He was surprised to notice that his interaction with the women he was meeting had changed dramatically. Although he was his playful self with women who were Alicia's and his old and trusted friends, he was much more reserved with women he was meeting for the first time. He realized that he'd seen Alicia as a guard against women who may misconstrue his playfulness.

>> **Capabilities and skills:** Alicia had managed all the household affairs because she enjoyed the element of control and juggling funds and utilities to get the best rates and deals. Brian didn't want to think about numbers when he was at home. Suddenly, Brian had to organize the running of the home as well as manage his work.

Brian was extremely organized at work, but both Alicia and he had given him tacit permission to be less so at home. Brian decided to bring his organizational skills into his life at home; he modeled his time keeping and organizational behavior at work to manage himself at home (for more on modeling, go to Chapter 19).

Brian also found himself at a loss regarding how to fill leisure time and holidays. He slowly developed new strategies (check out Chapter 12 for more on this area) for deciding where to go and how to organize trips. Initially, he

took holidays on which he was able to acquire new skills. Brian had always enjoyed cooking, and so his first holiday involved a week in Tuscany learning authentic Italian cuisine. Eventually, he was able to go on tours and see parts of the world Alicia and he hadn't got around to visiting.

Brian had to force himself to do things on his own, like going to the cinema. He took up hobbies that kept him interested in life, but his biggest thrill was helping a local charity with its accounts.

» **Beliefs and values:** Brian found that his beliefs regarding the future were shattered. Initially, all he saw when he looked into his future was darkness and loneliness. As the weeks became months, Brian began to see small glimmers of light as he forced himself to keep busy and engage with people. Interestingly, he says, on reexamining his values in relation to his work and relationships, he found that they hadn't changed, although his values about "life" had shifted dramatically. Before, they'd focused on what was important to him about his life with Alicia — companionship, love, laughter, fun. He discovered that, although he believed in love intellectually, he was too frightened to even contemplate the consequences of finding it again.

» **Identity:** What frightened Brian most was the loss of part of his identity. For 30 years, he'd been Alicia's husband. His role in life had been to look after her, and he thus now felt adrift. This stage was the hardest part of rebuilding his life, but he discovered that he had to do so a piece at a time. Two years on, holes still exist and can catch him unaware, but he recites a comforting litany to himself, "This too shall pass," and knows that he will manage.

» **Purpose:** Brian decided that what he places highest value on is leaving a legacy that will help people live more joyfully and "add happiness to the collective unconscious." As he began to experiment with new adventures, he realized that, even without Alicia at his side, his life could become purposeful once more. Brian remembers his good friend Paul saying to him, "Now is the time when you'll experience real growth and learning." It wasn't particularly helpful to Brian at the time, but he did realize that, despite the extreme emotional pain, he did grow as a person and develop greater compassion and tolerance in his dealings with people.

We offer Brian's anecdote to help you understand what you're likely to experience, both emotionally and logically, when you encounter change in your life, so that you find it easier to work through the change instead of fighting it and making the transition harder.

Use Table 20-2 to record the insights you gain as a result of change that's happening in your life and to write down things you could do differently to make change easier.

TABLE 20-2   The Effects of Change on Your Logical Levels

Logical Level	Insights	What You Can Do to Facilitate the Change
Purpose		
Identity		
Values and beliefs		
Capabilities and skills		
Behavior		
Environment		

Identifying the strongest level for change

Depending on your journey and circumstances, changing one of the logical levels may have the greatest impact on what you're trying to achieve.

ANECDOTE

Anna was highly ambitious but found herself living a life of mediocrity; she was extremely frustrated and blamed everyone and everything for her bad luck. In fact, Anna was lucky to have had a manager who engaged a coach to work with her. During a coaching session that involved a timeline exercise, Anna discovered that she was still influenced by the emotions she'd experienced on the death of her mother when she was 11 years old. She realized she had very deep-seated beliefs concerning life being unfair and her being unlucky. Doing some work on her timeline (see Chapter 13) at the beliefs level allowed Anna to let go of limiting beliefs and changed her life dramatically.

When Anna shifted her beliefs regarding the unfairness of life and reviewed her sense of being unlucky, she discovered that her identity shifted from that of a person who saw herself as a victim to someone who was successful. She felt brave enough to ask to go on a management training course (capabilities and skills), and she engaged her manager and colleagues in sharing ideas (behavior), which was something she'd felt too fearful of doing in the past.

TIP

Although you may need to strengthen a level, perhaps by adding new skills or redecorating your office, you may find that you need to remove something too. For example, if you're always late for meetings, you may need to improve your time-management techniques but, more importantly, you may have to remove unconscious emotional blocks causing the unhelpful behavior, as in Anna's case.

TRY THIS

Where are you experiencing change in your life? Do you want to make a big change but keep putting it off? Think about the story of Elaine earlier in this chapter in "Creating alignment in logical levels." She'd been presented with five opportunities to become an independent financial advisor (IFA) but held on to her job as a

project manager because it felt safe. She eventually took the plunge when her environment didn't support her circumstances. She had a baby and wanted to work from home so as to have more time with him. Doing the following exercise will help you to gain clarity about which of the logical levels you may need to develop or change:

1. **Make a note of the change you're going through or want to make.**

2. **Complete the logical level matrix in Table 20-3.**

3. **Identify the logical level that will have the most impact.**

4. **Write down the change you're going through or the change you want to make.**

TABLE 20-3 The Logical Level Matrix

Logical Level	How This Level Supports the Change	How This Level Doesn't Support the Change
Purpose		
Identity		
Beliefs and values		
Capabilities and skills		
Behavior		
Environment		

Now make a list of what you're going to do differently to make change easier or to instigate change. For example, Elaine realized that she needed to add independent financial advisor (IFA) qualifications to her capabilities and skills. She believed that, as a woman working from home, she was at a disadvantage in relation to other IFAs who could travel easily to clients and some of whom had offices and an infrastructure to support them. She wanted to stand out by being one of the most highly qualified IFAs.

Elaine also recognized that one of the reasons she'd delayed working from home was because she'd been afraid of the consequence of "being different" as a result of her gender in a very male-dominated world. She used the very powerful questions in the exercise provided in the "Letting go of fear" section, later in this chapter, to help her decide whether to work from home.

Holding On to Values

Your values are important because they support your identity (see Chapter 3 for more on values); a value of honesty and kindness may result in you knowing that you're a "good person." You measure your values in terms of the criteria you ascribe to them. People can share a common value but measure it differently. For example, two managers who espouse efficiency as a corporate value may measure efficiency with different criteria. One may see efficiency in purely monetary terms and only look at the bottom line. The other may measure efficiency in terms of people's level of engagement.

Because values lie in the realm of the unconscious mind, until you understand them consciously, you hold on to them with a fervor verging on the fanatical, which leaves very little wiggle room. You may think that this strength is good — perhaps when training puppies, children, and husbands! However, with regard to the workplace, some flexibility can be useful. The criteria for measuring the effectiveness of values can provide room for negotiation.

In the example of the managers ascribing to the efficiency value, a mediator may be able to show how employee engagement benefits the bottom line or how a healthy bottom line provides job security and leads to employees engaging more fully. Understanding how to address people's values makes any change easier, be it getting all the members of a team to pull together or a husband and wife to work toward a common goal.

Grasping the Importance of Clear Communication

The success of any change program depends on everybody in a team pulling together; the team can be the whole corporation, part of a department, or, indeed, a family. In this situation, rapport really comes into its own. The person who has established rapport can influence and bring on-board the people who can make or break the change process. The idea is that your communication reaches out to everybody so that they understand very clearly what you want from them. This section pulls together techniques given throughout this book to build rapport, especially in the written form.

If you think about the perceptual positions (which we discuss in Chapter 6) and remember to create communication from the perspective of the person you're

addressing, you find that carrying people along with you is much easier. Here, you need to understand at least some of the values of the people involved in the change process. (Turn to Chapter 8 to discover more about values.)

Knowing your own values is important in choosing a job or a partner, be it a business or life partner. You need to understand other people's values when trying to succeed in achieving a common goal. You can assume things about common values in a company if you're careful in choosing who you employ. If the corporate values are repeated time and again, the people who stay and flourish understand these values and are in tune with them. As a manager or an individual wanting to build a long-lasting relationship, knowing the values of the person you want to motivate is very useful; sometimes, you simply need to ask, "What's important to you about x?" where "x" can be "working for this company," "a relationship," or "working together." Having everyone working to fulfill common values makes change so much easier than if individuals work to their own agendas dictated by their individual values.

REMEMBER

Using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (VAK) language allows your audience to understand your message more easily. Chapter 5 tells you more about these aspects.

Like values, the meta programs (which we describe in Chapter 7) are some of the most abstract filters that you use to sift through the data your senses pick up about your world. Because of their abstractions, using the meta programs with a person shows a preference, and helps you to build rapport more easily. We suggest you start with the toward/away from and big picture/detail meta programs.

REMEMBER

Keep in mind that some people feel overwhelmed if they're given too much information, and so a useful practice may be to provide a short overview followed by more detail. For example, if you're easily overwhelmed by too much detail, buying a new phone or car or planning a long-haul holiday can be difficult. A useful strategy is to ask someone you trust who has a similar lifestyle to tell you which phones or cars they considered or recent holiday itineraries that could fit your ideal criteria. Having fewer options from which to choose makes decision-making quicker and easier.

ANECDOTE

During a department restructuring, the well-meaning manager, Jan, wanted the change process to be an inclusive experience for the department so kept everyone apprised of the smallest detail regarding the change. Productivity hit rock bottom, however, because the programmers were extremely distressed by the barrage of information they were being sent several times a day. Productivity rose only when Jan realized she needed to filter the incoming flood of information to only that which would affect the programmers.

Creating the Mindset for Change

We introduce you to the concept of behavioral flexibility as one of the pillars of NLP in Chapter 1. This idea is crucial in dealing with whatever life throws at you. When you can develop the mindset that allows you to deal with these variables, you have the means to maintain equilibrium for most of the time. Why most of the time? Well, we're very conscious that when experiencing something like bereavement, for example, life gets very tough, and perhaps all you can do is go into survival mode. But remember, even managing to crawl through the day is a testament to your ability to be flexible in the face of such a harsh reality.

ANECDOTE

When Mary was undergoing chemotherapy, she was tempted to worry about the future and how her family would cope. Six years later she was given the "all clear" by her medical team. "Looking back now," she says, "I realize that the most valuable thing I did was to scale back my thoughts to what was happening on a day-to-day basis instead of taking a long-term view. I could enjoy a good conversation with friends and a trip out for a coffee or to see a film, and that was plenty enough to think about. Worrying about getting back to work or the effect of my illness on my family was too much information to handle. This microview was a new behavior for me." Changing her timeline to being "in time" made the difference. (See Chapter 13 for more information on timelines.)

TIP

Every day remind yourself of something that you have achieved, however small it may seem to you.

Letting go of fear

Fear incapacitates. People aren't so much afraid of making a mistake in itself as afraid of the consequences of that action. Fear is people reacting to their existing model of the world (Chapter 2 covers NLP presuppositions). If you've experienced an environment in which you were constantly criticized or mistakes weren't tolerated, you're likely to be fearful of being criticized if your actions aren't in line with what's expected. This fear may force you into a state of procrastination or inactivity.

ANECDOTE

Consider the following urban legend pertaining to a top salesperson at IBM who reputedly lost a very large sum of money on a particular project. When the salesperson was summoned to see Thomas J. Watson, Sr., one of IBM's most influential leaders, he offered his resignation but it was rejected. Watson said that IBM had just spent a vast amount of money on the salesperson's training and didn't want to waste it.

If you're holding yourself back because you're afraid to do something, for example moving to a different job, accepting a marriage proposal, moving house, accepting a promotion and so on, the following exercise may help you to uncover your hidden fears.

This exercise helps you with your decision-making. Even if afterward you decide to do nothing, you've still made a conscious decision. This process itself can dispel many of your fears:

1. **Ask yourself the questions from the well-formed outcome exercise that we describe in Chapter 4.**

    Here, "x" relates to taking some action:

    What will happen if I do x?

    What won't happen if I do x?

    What will happen if I don't do x?

    What won't happen if I don't do x?

2. **Make a list of the pros and cons involved in making your decision.**

3. **Make a list of everything that you think may go wrong and how you'd deal with the arising problems.**

4. **Decide that you're going to learn from the situation, no matter what happens.**

5. **Release any fears that haven't gone away using submodalities (see the following anecdote about David).**

In the world of business, the fact is that companies sometimes set up change programs to improve efficiency as a means of survival — which often means cutbacks in programs, hours, or people — or to improve the bottom line. Departments can be merged or closed down or a problem — such as strong competition, high attrition rates, low morale, or reduced productivity — may need to be addressed. NLP techniques can help you through such difficult times.

When David and his colleagues faced another swathe of cuts at work, he felt the familiar dread of losing his job dogging his every waking moment. He'd been through several changes and states of feeling "not good" and realized that his motivation and well-being had both suffered. He decided enough was enough and adopted the following strategies to remain productive:

1. David applied the "as if" reframing process (which we explain in Chapter 14) and asked himself, "What's the worst that can happen?"

David knew that he may be out of work for several months but because he'd built a financial "war chest" after the last cuts, he could survive for six months without work. This realization went a long way to alleviating the feeling of dread he felt when he thought of being downsized. However, although the frequency declined, the intensity remained. David decided to release the fear that he felt each time he thought of the organizational changes being incorporated (see point 3).

He decided he did not like his work defining his identity, as in "I am a salesperson." He asked himself what he'd do if he didn't have to work to pay his mortgage and remembered how much he'd loved woodwork at school. David decided that, regardless of the outcome at work, he'd sign up for a class in wood carving.

2. He recognized he had a choice about how he dealt with the change.

   Instead of letting the change get to him, he decided to treat each day as a learning experience. At the end of each day, he listed what had been difficult. He then reframed the difficulty by asking himself, "What can I learn from this?" and "How can I use it in the days ahead?"

3. Most importantly, David decided to take charge of the way he reacted to the negative conversations around him and the fear he felt.

   He began employing a pattern interrupt (see the Tip icon that follows this list) each time his colleagues began talking about the problems they were experiencing. He discovered how to differentiate between when the talk was negative simply because his colleagues felt good about feeling bad and when a need arose to solve a genuine problem. When the talk was meaningless negativity, David held his hand up and said something along the lines of. "Let's stop wallowing; we know things are tough and they're likely to get tougher, but we've got to stay strong." After a while, David simply holding up his hand switched his colleagues into problem-solving mode.

   David discovered that, for him, dread had two components. He felt the fear as a heaviness descending, sliding down from his shoulders, and saw a solid, black cube encasing his torso. The cube was a metaphor for the way he felt in his own body (see Chapter 17 for more on metaphors). Each time the dread returned, David changed the picture of the cube by introducing pockets of silver into it. The cube turned into a honeycomb of gray and then silver until it disappeared. (Check out Chapter 10 for more on submodalities.) While he worked with the image, David also did some breath work with an affirmation that he said out loud, if he was by himself. He drew a breath deep into the center of the cube and on each exhalation said, "I'm relaxed, strong, and confident, and I feel good."

TIP

A *pattern interrupt* is when a break occurs in a pattern of thought or behavior. For example, when a coach asks a client, "How can I help?" the client may take a deep breath, link into feeling bad about a problem, and burst into tears. These steps constitute part of the programming sequence the client is following regarding the problem. The coach may break the flow in the pattern by doing or saying something unexpected. Anecdotally, Richard Bandler has been said to have tipped water over a client to break her pattern. The aim of the unexpected interruption is to break the series of steps that a person has built into a sequence.

Although David's job is still under threat, he no longer allows himself to become incapacitated. He realizes that he has an existence away from the office and that he'd rather have a "whole life" than put it on hold until he can get away from work at the end of the day.

One rather interesting side effect occurred as a result of David's acceptance of the change. His manager noticed that he was far more productive than other members of staff and decided to offer him a promotion when the cuts were done. Now David feels that he's more secure if/when future cuts are announced and is more engaged with his work. His productivity has increased now that he doesn't feel the dread that was his constant companion before he decided to change the way he thought. He gets more recognition for his work, and so he's more engaged and finds himself in an upward spiral.

Being willing to experiment

When a section of an IT department was being outsourced, some of the people who were going to lose their jobs buried their heads in the sand and waited for the inevitable. A couple of people, however, were willing to experiment with new ways of working and developed their hobbies into potential businesses. The difference in mindset gave this pair the flexibility to move forward. The members of the other group responded with inactivity and a sense of helplessness because they were unable to think beyond, "I've always worked this way," and hope that they'd find work in a diminishing market. The more enterprising pair believed, "We can do better than this."

REMEMBER

Part of this healthy mindset is accepting that nothing's permanent and the person who's able to respond most flexibly within a system (see Chapter 2 on presuppositions) survives and may even thrive. Being fearful stops you experimenting and creating options for yourself.

Getting Help on the Way

You may find that managing simple change on your own is easy. For introducing bigger changes, however, getting help facilitates the process. For personal change you can get relevant help, such as that of a coach, a nutritionist, a financial advisor, an estate agent or, if you think of a holiday as a temporary change, you may employ the services of a travel counselor.

ANECDOTE

For making change at work, using *change champions* is essential. A department of 500 people was being restructured. Staff members were divided into groups of 20. Each group was assigned a staff manager, and all information was funneled through that manager. The 20 managers bought into the change and went out and sold it to their teams. They were, in effect, the "change champions." This reorganization turned out to be one of the more successful, with minimal disruption and loss of productivity. Another reason given for the success of the project was that the management team and the top 200 people out of 500 all received individual one-on-one coaching sessions. Management placed a high value on clear communication and timely support systems for employees.

Strengthening resources

Throughout this book, we talk about the need to be flexible. Being willing to experiment is an aspect of being flexible, and you're more likely to experiment if you're in a resourceful state. When you feel resourceful, you can find ways around problems more easily. This mindset, in turn, makes change a lot easier for you to deal with than if you were to feel resentful.

ANECDOTE

Amanda, a salesperson, was unstoppable when she felt well and energetic. On other days, she just couldn't cut the mustard. She decided to make a memory of herself on one of her unstoppable days. To do so, she picked a day on which she'd been really successful and wrote down, in graphic detail, exactly what she'd seen, heard, and done to make herself feel so energetic and unstoppable. She used these notes to create an *anchor* that would make her unstoppable. (Chapter 9 has all the info on how to use anchors.) Initially, Amanda carried out the exercise with a friend who helped her follow each step correctly. When she could remember the steps, she was able to do the exercise by herself. Her sales rose by 15 percent in the first three months after she started employing her "unstoppable anchor" before seeing a sales prospect.

Pacing the future

Even when you've chosen to introduce some change into your life, you may at times find that your resolve wavers. A useful exercise for staying on track is to

mentally take yourself into the future to the time when you've achieved your goal to remind yourself of what it is you want to make happen. This technique is particularly good when you start a program of healthy eating and are being tempted by a chocolate bar whispering your name. You can use this process to break the unhelpful strategy (turn to Chapter 12 to discover more on breaking habits) of instant gratification by creating an alternative strategy in which you develop an awareness of what you eat. In fact, you can be mindful of all your actions.

Planning the road map

As Billy Wilder is reputed to have said, "Hindsight is always twenty–twenty." One way of achieving a goal is to know where you are and where you want to go and then logically to work out the steps needed to achieve that outcome. An even better way to do this is to act "as if" you've achieved your goal and then work backward, with hindsight, following the steps in this exercise (see Chapter 14 for more about "as-if reframing"). Chapter 13 tells you in detail how to "time travel."

This exercise is a variation on the "Getting rid of anxiety" exercise in Chapter 13 and can show you a different way of using timelines:

1. **Find yourself somewhere safe and quiet to relax deeply and think about your goal.**

2. **Draw a line and write down the start and finish points for your goal at each end of the line.**

3. **Think about the steps involved in getting you from start to finish and jot these down on the line.**

4. **Float way above your timeline so that you can see your past and your future stretching below you.**

5. **Still above your timeline, float forward along it until you're above the point at which you've successfully achieved your goal.**

6. **Turn and look back to now and allow your unconscious mind to fill in any gaps you hadn't thought of on your road map and add these to the sheet you've created.**

7. **Allow all the events along your timeline to align so that they support your goal, noting any actions you may have to take along the way.**

8. **When you're ready, float back to your present and back down into the room.**

Taking One Step Forward

The *decision* to make a change takes just a moment, but the change itself can take anywhere from a few minutes to a lifetime. What's important to recognize is that, in order to incorporate change, you have to do something *actively*. This section looks at the importance of the first and last steps in a change project.

Making that initial move

The first step is the most important because it provides the momentum for the second and subsequent steps of your journey. Often, breaking down a goal into smaller, manageable chunks keeps you motivated on the path to success.

ANECDOTE

Kaya, a long-term drug user, was walking home from a nightclub very early one morning when an encounter with an acquaintance turned her life around. When she tried to talk to him, all he said was, "Go home, look in the mirror, and make some different choices." Kaya duly went home and took a long, hard look at herself; she realized she looked terrible. Her skin was gray, she had dark shadows under her eyes, and she was bedraggled and emaciated. She acknowledged that she looked and felt dreadful.

Kaya said to herself there and then, "I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to look like this anymore." This decision, although stated in the negative (check out Chapter 4 on how to create well-formed outcomes) was her first step in regaining control of her life. She had a strong away-from motivation; that is, she recognized what she didn't want. (See Chapter 7 for more on the away-from motivation pattern.)

The next thing she did was to change her environment. She stopped seeing her drug-taking friends and got a job. During her clean-up phase, a neighbor invited Kaya to join her conversational French club. Eventually, Kaya rediscovered the fluency she'd attained at school and moved to Paris to work as an interpreter.

Celebrating and gaining closure

Many goal-setting processes go into great depth, talking about well-formed outcomes, planning the road map, and taking the first step. Not many talk about the last step or *closure*. Admittedly, closure isn't the last step in the grand scheme of things, but integrating a last step to signal the end of a phase in a project or the project itself can be very useful.

Any change requires focus and the expenditure of huge amounts of physical and emotional energy; it places people under considerable stress. This stress can be *distress* (bad stress) or *eustress* (good stress, what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the author of several inspirational books, calls *flow*). In either case, you need a period in which to recharge your batteries. Gaining closure releases the tension of concentrated work, signals the end of a phase, and gives you permission to move on to the next challenge.

TRY THIS

End a project — which could be at home (such as having your apartment revamped) or at work (where you're involved with improving productivity within a team) — with a debrief. You could examine the following:

>> What went well?

>> What could have been better?

>> What lessons were learned?

>> What will you do differently next time?

Remember to congratulate the team (even if that team has only one member — you) and, finally, make sure that you *celebrate*!

6

The Part of Tens

Get a taste of the broad impact of NLP on ten areas of everyday life, from parenting and teaching to sales success and personal development.

Investigate ten great resources for deepening your knowledge of NLP, from books and websites.

Learn to watch movies and television programs in a different way.

Chapter **21**

Ten Applications of NLP

W e find daily applications for NLP in our work as professional coaches, consultants, and trainers. At home with family of all age groups and friends, NLP also influences how we think and behave. So, how can you use NLP in your life? In this chapter, we present ten practical suggestions that we hope arouse your curiosity regarding how you can apply the contents of this book right now. Remember that these points are only suggestions: You choose what makes a difference for you and the people you connect with.

Developing Yourself

Personal development is a massive arena, because people are searching for mean-ing and contentment in an unpredictable world. They're seeking help in managing transition points in their lives when faced with upheaval. When you read this book, we hope that you take away this one lesson: NLP offers a means for you to learn, grow, and develop yourself, and you can choose whether the ideas fit your needs or not. In addition, you can use NLP to coach and help others, in which case you need to remain strong and healthy yourself so that you can be an authentic role model.

The NLP toolkit offers a collection of models and exercises, as well as encouraging an inquisitive mindset that allows you to do the following:

» Choose your most resourceful emotional state and use *anchors*, a mental technique to access and hold that good state when you're feeling challenged. You progress best when you feel safe enough to have a go at something new. To explore how to set and fire anchors, look at Chapter 9.

» Guide your thinking in different ways using the assumptions on which NLP is based — check out Chapter 2 for more on these NLP presuppositions.

» Find out what makes you function at your best — gathering information about how you reflect your experience through your senses, what NLP calls *representational systems*. You can get to grips with representational systems (sometimes called *modalities*) in Chapter 5.

» Take responsibility for your own learning instead of waiting for someone else to do it for you.

» Develop a sense of clarity regarding what you really want in all aspects of your life. The well-formed outcomes we introduce in Chapter 4 are fundamental to looking at what you want. Also check out the checklist on the Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com.

» Find out how to make changes at the most appropriate logical level of experience to improve your ability and self-confidence — whether that confidence concerns your environment, behavior, capability, beliefs, identity, or purpose. This aspect is discussed further in Chapter 11.

» Pay attention to your energy levels to ensure that you don't push yourself too hard and burn out.

» Discover how to build rapport more easily; we devote the whole of Chapter 6 to developing this important skill.

Managing Your Personal and Professional Relationships

"Help. This relationship isn't working!" Having a bad relationship with someone can be a horrible, stuck experience. The door is closed in your face. One statement you hear a lot in NLP is, "If what you're doing isn't working, do something different." Fortunately, NLP offers many ways for you to become unstuck and open the door to more possibilities. Here are a couple of methods you can start with:

>> **The Meta Model:** This model provides a way for you to delve below the surface of vague everyday language like, "I'm not happy with this," with useful questions that gather specific information and challenge assumptions that get in the way of happy and rewarding relationships. When you know how to communicate more precisely, you can get to the heart of what you and other people really mean to say. The Meta Model is described in detail in Chapter 15.

>> **The NLP meta-mirror:** This technique encourages you to take different perceptual positions. The meta-mirror is a favorite method for exploring challenging situations through the act of examining how you relate to other people. By taking different viewpoints into account, you come away with fresh ideas to move your relationships forward — or say a polite goodbye. The meta-mirror is described in detail in Chapter 6, which also guides you through ideas of building rapport.

Negotiating a Win–Win Solution

Suppose that you're going to enter into an important negotiation in your life — perhaps you've spotted the home of your dreams. NLP can help you to get the best deal when you're confronted with estate agents pushing you to buy or rent the new home at the highest price. NLP helps accomplish your aim by providing principles and strategies you can use to everybody's advantage. Take a look at the techniques in the following list, which, although we relate to your next home, you can apply whether you're negotiating for a job, buying a car, hiring contract staff at work or attempting conflict resolution:

>> Go for the positive outcome — begin with your desired result in mind. Use positive language. Always focus on what you want rather than what you don't want. For the full story on outcomes, see Chapter 4.

>> Engage your senses — make your outcome more specific by noticing what it looks like, sounds like and feels like when you achieve a successful negotiation. You can get a sense of this technique in Chapter 5.

>> Note your *hot buttons* (your preferred criteria) — focus on five key elements that are important to you in making the move. Put them in order of priority and keep returning to them to check that you're getting what you want.

>> Note the hot buttons from the point of view of the current owners — what's important to them? Imagine what being in their shoes would be like and remind yourself of what they want every time you have contact.

>> Keep in mind your current home's positive amenities and features that you don't want to lose. These positive elements may be the proximity to local shops, the sunny south-facing garden, or the excellent transport links.

>> Know your bottom line. Be prepared to walk away with no deal instead of getting carried away in the moment just to complete a deal that's disappointing for you.

>> Manage your state of mind. Staying calm and relaxed when the negotiation gets to you helps you to make the best next move. Take a look at Chapter 9 about dropping anchors.

>> Use the technique of *chunking* — the ability to shift someone's view to the big picture or focus on specifics. Chunking is a key skill in any negotiation. If you're disagreeing on details, chunk upward from the specifics of your contract to gain common agreement on key points, and then you can chunk downward to smaller issues when you've achieved that common ground. Chapter 15 helps you to get specific when necessary, while Chapter 16 shows you how to speak in general terms that are easy to agree with. With this flexibility in your approach, you increase the chances of the other person hearing your message loud and clear.

>> Maintain rapport with everyone in the sale chain. Even when you disagree with the content of what they're saying, match and mirror their body language and tone of voice. Things progress more smoothly when everybody listens! We cover the all-important NLP skill of rapport building in Chapter 6. Also, Chapter 5 gives you more ways of building rapport by recognizing whether someone has a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic preference so that you can then use language to match that preference.

Motivating and Leading Staff

Employing people and keeping them engaged, interested, and working at their best is a costly business. Managers and leaders can really benefit from some understanding of NLP to improve employee engagement. A powerful starting point is to revisit the four pillars of NLP outlined in Chapter 1:

>> **Rapport:** The foundation of all good motivation. Work happens in community with other people — customers, suppliers, and employees. Building strong relationships is thus more important in the long term than technical excellence alone.

>> **Sensory awareness:** Develop the listening skills to really tune in to what's happening in the workplace. Good managers have a sixth sense regarding when things are going well — or not; they can almost always sniff out the

challenges as well as see, hear, and feel them. Outstanding business leaders listen to their gut feelings. Not only do they have their finger on the pulse of world events and act according to their intuition, but they also buck the trend by forging new directions.

>> **Outcome thinking:** Such thinking enables you to know what you want rather than getting bogged down in everyday problems. It allows you to develop a clear strategy of what can be achieved along your timeline.

>> **Behavioral flexibility:** Flexibility is critical if you're to be innovative and get the best results from others. Being able to step into employees' shoes and truly get a sense of where they're coming from is highly beneficial because you can then adapt your approach accordingly.

Great leaders know that people are not highly motivated by money; above a certain practical level, money is not a core value. Instead, people want to work with those they trust and to be trusted in return. When we ask people about their best experiences at work, they highlight the importance of criteria such as acknowledgment, recognition, honesty, fairness, and meaningful work. Chapter 3 covers how to align people with their values.

Chapter 11 shows you how you can use the logical levels model to increase motivation and team cohesion within an organization. It offers insights into finding a common purpose and enabling people to get a sense of how their identity fits in with that of the organization for which they work. You may find working through the logical levels model with your colleagues a useful team-building exercise. In Chapter 18, we talk about *deletions* and *unconscious bias*, whereby it's all too easy to recruit people in your own image without even knowing that you're ignoring people who don't fit the mold. Stronger managers have the foresight to hire people who are different from themselves. As Chapter 7 on the NLP meta programs explains, you need to achieve a balance of people with different qualities: some who are go-getting and proactive; others who are more considered and reactive; some who find lots of creative options balanced by others who favor setting up procedures; some who will see the big picture; and others who follow through on detail.

Creating Powerful Presentations

The ability to communicate well is fundamental to your success. In fact, you may find that it's the single most important skill that affects your future. When you can present confidently, you have the leading edge in so many areas of life, whether your passion is to be a politician, sportsperson, teacher, TV presenter, fundraiser, or business leader of the year. Have you got the self-confidence to go out and stand up for what you believe in? Do you really want to sit through a

celebration dinner scared because you have to give the vote of thanks at the end? Or have the wobbles when delivering training online? If you can present well, you can get ahead. Or simply relax and have a good time.

So what's stopping you making powerful presentations? In one word — you!

Sadly, so many people we meet are terrified of presenting. And if they're not terrified, they certainly prefer to hang around backstage than get out front and sock it to an audience.

NLP can make a difference to you in three ways:

>> It shows you how to make your purpose in presenting crystal clear.

>> It shows you how to touch everyone in an audience through your use of language.

>> It shows you how to feel confident about being visible in front of any group.

Imagine that you've been invited to give a talk at the annual meeting of your local gardening club. (For gardening, substitute your own hobby, from online gaming to hamster-training to glider-flying.)

Using NLP, your first task is to engage your brain to decide on the outcome of your presentation. What result, or action, do you want to happen when people have been inspired by your speech? Map out this outcome clearly for yourself, bearing in mind what the audience would like to discover from you.

As you begin to build the content of your talk, think VAK — visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (head to Chapter 5 for tips on engaging with people's dominant senses). How are you going to connect with people who like pictures, those who hear the words, and those who just go with their gut feelings? As you develop your script, remember that some people just need the headlines and others like the nitty-gritty details.

Remember that NLP gives you the tools to prepare mentally for any presentation. Be clear about how you want to appear at the presentation — laughing and jovial, full of deep and meaningful gravitas, or perhaps somewhere in-between? Find a time when you were like that in the past so that you can hold, or anchor, the previous experience and regain that feeling for yourself. Turn to Chapter 9 for all about setting stage anchors.

Here's the most important tip — the Holy Grail: Don't get hung up on other people's tips and techniques. We all present differently, and being yourself can be refreshing. When you speak from the heart on something you care passionately about, people connect with your authenticity and sense of purpose. Chapter 11 guides you via the logical levels model to articulate your sense of purpose.

Managing Your Time and Precious Resources

Everybody has the same amount of time in the week: 168 hours. So why do some people spend their lives racing against the clock, whereas others gently amble along? The difference is in how people use that time.

Understanding how you relate to time makes a big difference to your daily experience. NLP distinguishes between people who operate *in time* — where you live in and for the moment — and people who operate *through time* — where you step back to view past, present, and future as an onlooker. Being in the moment is easier when you're *in time*. Planning time is much easier when you're *through time*. Time-traveling tips are waiting for you in Chapter 13.

As an NLP coach, Kate encourages her clients to notice how they relate to time, and to spend it wisely, in order to understand the impact of spending time on what they don't want to be doing and freeing up their energy for what really motivates them. Your time is precious, and when you've spent it, you can't reclaim it.

Taking on too much to please others has the opposite effect when you let them down. NLP shows you how to say "no" while maintaining rapport with friends and colleagues. Chapter 6 covers how to create and maintain rapport.

Being Coached to Success

Do you want to do a particular something that you've thought about for a long time but have yet to start or to achieve? If so, NLP coaching can help you make that leap from the idea — the initial desire to make a change — to making it happen.

When you work with a coach who embraces the principles of NLP, that person uses the NLP presuppositions and believes in your unlimited potential. The coach supports you in achieving goals that seemed impossible by helping you gain clarity on your values and beliefs and changing the interference that gets in your way. And that process can be seriously liberating and fun. No joke!

NLP coaching focuses your attention on getting the results you want — the outcomes — and stops you dithering along the way, dissipating energy on all the things that you don't want. One way it does this is by helping you shape your goals into well-formed outcomes (check out Chapter 4). These are goals that are

positive, specific enough to feel engaging, vibrant, and real. They're also ecologically sound — meaning they fit in with your wider life and don't create negative side effects. NLP helps you to jump over or remove the barriers that stop you. Coaching closes that gap from where you are now to where you want to get — from your *present state* to your *desired state*.

Action turns the dream into reality. One key reason why coaching gets you results is that you make a commitment to action. Another reason is that you break down your goals into bite-sized, realistic chunks. When you work with a coach, you voice your commitment out loud to somebody else, as if that person is standing beside you with a stopwatch and clipboard and checking in at regular intervals to make sure that you're on track. Saying what you want makes the goal feel more concrete.

The principles of NLP can apply to achieving success in sport; thus, you often find sports coaches using the anchoring techniques of NLP to help a client get into a confident state before a big match or performance.

Coaching is often about enabling people to restore their balance and harmony. We believe that coaching is about much more than simply exceling on the golf course or in boardroom battles. Taking a holistic view — considering all aspects of your life — enables you to create your own future. We coach highly successful executives who want to be outstanding in their work. By examining the whole picture of their lives, which includes their work patterns, these people unleash their own energy and choose their own direction to get what they want.

If you excel in one aspect of your life to the detriment of other aspects — say, your work — life at work may be great, but your home life becomes miserable. You then have an unbalanced and potentially unhealthy existence. Clients who succeed at the extreme heights in business can damage their health or important relationships along the way. And those who have a very comfortable home life can neglect their professional potential. If these scenarios describe you, working with an NLP coach can help you create the kind of life that's most meaningful to you.

Using NLP to Support Your Health

NLP has much to offer you if you want to stay healthy, because it recognizes the inextricable connection between mind and body. NLP views a person as a system that needs to remain balanced to stay healthy.

In life, the unexpected will happen — who could have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftereffects? The danger zone comes when you fail to notice the

cumulative effect of external demands and your internal stress responses, which allows them to escalate until life feels out of control. At that point, the body often steps in with a braking mechanism: chronic fatigue, tension headaches, back pain, outbursts of anger, or waves of anxiety. These are not random symptoms; they're warning flags that you're no longer steering your own life.

Life will always throw challenges your way. When you pause, notice, and respond with awareness instead of reacting from raw emotion, you take back control — not just over the moment, but over your life.

Ill health has many causes, but one of the biggest culprits is stress. It doesn't just live in your head; it seeps into your body. And while the external causes of stress vary — deadlines, financial worries, relationship tensions — your response to them is often shaped by internal patterns such as low self-esteem, perfectionism, fear of failure, or the belief that to be loved you must please others, as in the following anecdote about Cassy. These inner drivers act like amplifiers, turning ordinary pressures into overwhelming stress.

Stress is not just what happens to you; it's often a pattern you run in your mind — a strategy (see Chapter 12 on strategies). Think of a strategy as a mental program that keeps looping until you interrupt it. For example, if you tell yourself, "This person is stressing me out," you're giving them control over your state. Recognizing this strategy and changing it breaks the loop and hands the power back to you.

You can ward off stress by staying true to who you are — your identity and your values (see Chapters 3, 8, 20 for more on values). Sometimes, you may need the help of a coach to clarify your identity, your strengths, and your values and to use them as a compass in your life.

When you know who you are and what matters most, you're better able to channel your energy into activities that stretch and fulfill you rather than those that drain you. You also gain the confidence to set strong boundaries and say "no" to what can pull you off course and say "yes" to what truly aligns with you and your values.

From this place of clarity and alignment, you naturally step into flow. Flow is that perfect place of balance where your skills rise to meet the challenge, and you're so absorbed in the task that time seems to melt away. In business, this means increased productivity, more creative problem-solving, and deeper engagement with work.

Flow brings a state of *relaxed concentration*: Your mind is focused but not forced, and your body is alert yet calm. Of course, you won't experience flow in every task, and rest and relaxation are essential to restore energy between deep focus. Flow can arise just as easily at home when you're cooking, gardening, engaging in a hobby, or even decluttering because you're fully engaged.

The reward is profound: lowered stress hormones, more energy, greater well-being, improved personal resilience, and the freedom to thrive both at work and at home.

ANECDOTE

Cassy, a delegate on Romilla's Beyond Distress workshop, had worn herself to a frazzle in trying to meet her commitments at work following a recent promotion and simultaneously satisfy the demands of her family. During the workshop, Cassy realized that she was pandering to the demands of her boss and her family because she had a deep need for love that stemmed from her adoption as a baby. Despite loving adoptive parents and a very stable and happy childhood, Cassy had always felt that she was one of life's rejects because her biological mother had given her away.

Another delegate heard Cassy's story and reframed her perspective as "but you're really one of the chosen." The change in Cassy was palpable and lovely to see as she processed this positive slant on her identity. After the workshop, Cassy was able to say "no" to many of the people in her life, and one of the unforeseen benefits was that her children became more responsible for their own lives.

WARNING

Using tools such as the Milton Model (see Chapter 16), metaphors and stories (see Chapter 17), and anchors (check out Chapter 9) can help you to reduce your stress levels and fear in relation to your health. However, unless you have medical training, we don't advise you to use NLP with anyone with chronic health issues. Never attempt to "fix" someone or override the physical symptoms, which are important messages that need professional attention.

Connecting to Your Audience: Advice for Trainers and Educators

NLP has expanded its reach into education via specialist NLP programs for teachers and educators. People who want to lead business training can also benefit from NLP.

NLP recognizes that individuals learn in very different ways, and only the pupil really knows the best way. Good teachers take responsibility for teaching so that the pupils can profit — they truly connect and inspire. Neuroscientists also demonstrate how important it is to understand the neuroplasticity of adolescent brains (see Chapter 3 for details). NLP moves the emphasis from teaching to learning and gets people to begin to notice how they learn in the best way. Work with simple

techniques such as the Spelling Strategy (explained in Chapter 12) transforms education for children, and ultimately the quality of their future life experiences.

The learning process involves many rich dimensions beyond just being taught facts or given the right answers. For learning to connect and last, people need to be put into a positive and receptive state. Getting yourself, as the trainer, and the group into a receptive state is far more important than covering all elements of the curriculum.

When you're discovering a new skill, become curious about how to make that work for you. Think of your best learning experience — a time when you felt good about learning. For example, Kate knows that she learns best when having fun, being with people and feeling okay to experiment and make mistakes. These details aren't going to be the same for other people, and thus, when she runs workshops, she pays attention to the needs of her delegates and adapts her training accordingly.

NLP shows you how to discover people's preferences with regard to taking in information — as a teacher, notice that some people respond to pictures, some to words and others to touch or feelings. Using highly general language at the beginning of a session enables you to connect with the different levels of expertise in a group. So your introduction may go something like this:

> We cover many aspects of the subject today. Some of you will already have a lot of knowledge in this area and have your own ideas, opinions and experiences to contribute.

> For some of you, the concepts will just reinforce what you already know and give you time to sit back and consider the implications of what you do already.

> For others, there will be new perspectives and, during the course of the day, we will have the opportunity to explore some new ways to add value and power to what you're currently using.

> You will make up your own minds on how these ideas will be applied.

Also keep in mind the various stages of learning. When you take on a new skill, such as driving a car, you move through different levels of competence. When you start out, you're blissfully ignorant — *unconsciously incompetent*. You don't know what you don't know. Then you move to *conscious incompetence*, and you've woken up to what you don't know. As you build your capability, you become *consciously competent* until you become *unconsciously competent* when, as an expert driver, you forget what being a learner was like. This process can make learning from experts difficult because they can be so far removed from being a beginner that they say, "just do it," and are unable to break down the skill into easy stages.

Getting the Best Job for You

Huge competition exists for good jobs in challenging economic times, which means that approaching your career change and job interviews strategically is more important than ever. Shifting jobs merely because you're bored — like changing the wallpaper or going shopping and coming home with yet another blue shirt — can be counterproductive. You may change jobs and then realize that the idea of change attracted you and not the job itself.

Working with an NLP-trained career coach can guide you toward obtaining not just a different job, but the right one — a job that takes your life in the best direction for you. It aligns with your identity and values and supports all the different facets of how you live. It also enables you to present yourself at your best in all interactions, not just at an interview. (Most jobs don't get advertised but pass via word of mouth.) Career planning needs to be done proactively, or you can end up like Alice in Wonderland: not too bothered about where you get to, just so long as it's somewhere. Making informed decisions, based on your values and desired future, ensures that you don't leave a perfectly good job only to end up where you're very unhappy, or at best just as unsettled as you were in your previous job, and still searching for the greener grass.

Make your job search a well-formed outcome using the checklist on the Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com. Do your homework on the person with the power to appoint you to your dream job and decide how that person's map of the world operates. Chapter 6 contains a checklist to help you think about the people you need to influence.

Be creative about making yourself stand out from the crowd and develop your networking skills. To gain perspective, shift into second and third positions (which we describe in Chapter 6) and think of yourself as a product that needs a brand manager; what would your features and benefits be? In front of a mirror, practice being the person your dream employer wants to employ — check out the communication information in Chapter 6 to ensure that your words, gestures, and tone of voice present a consistent view. How would you dress and talk? What would you be saying about yourself and your capabilities?

REMEMBER You need to believe in yourself for others to feel confident in you — and believe in you, too.

Chapter **22**

Ten Books to Add to Your Library

We read voraciously. This trait enabled us to expand our knowledge of personal development and NLP. Here, we offer you ten NLP-related books that had a major impact on our development; use them as a shortcut to your growth. We hope they enrich your life and the lives of those around you.

Changing Belief Systems with NLP

Robert Dilts, author of *Changing Belief Systems with NLP* (Meta Publications, 1990), is one of the most creative trainers and authors in the world of NLP and one of the people who really walks his talk. In this book, he describes how your beliefs can prevent you from achieving what you want and living a totally fulfilling life. The book helps you explore your beliefs and gives you exercises to change them in order to create alignment at all levels of your personality and establish permanent change.

The User's Manual for the Brain

In *The User's Manual for the Brain* (Crown House Publishing, 2001), Bob G. Bodenhamer and L. Michael Hall, two of the most prolific writers in the field of NLP, have produced a book for someone who wants to get to the NLP practitioner level without going on a course. Unlike some other NLP books for beginners, this one is very easy to follow and gives you a really good foundation prior to attending a practitioner course. In addition, master practitioners of NLP are sure to find this a brilliant book for revising their existing knowledge.

Core Transformation

Core Transformation (Real People Press, 1996) offers techniques in NLP, discovered and developed by Connirae Andreas, and designed to bring greater wholeness to the reader in order to facilitate personal change. The core transformation technique is based on the premise that conflicting parts exist in every person's unconscious, yearning to reach a core state and thereby wholeness. This book is a breakthrough in the field of personal development because it enables you to use limitations as a springboard to reaching core states such as inner peace.

Frogs into Princes

Frogs into Princes (Real People Press, 1979) is one of the seminal books in the field of NLP. The book is actually the transcript of a live training session conducted by the founding fathers of NLP, John Grinder and Richard Bandler, and beautifully edited by Steve Andreas. Although further developments have occurred in NLP since this book was first published, this title is a must-read for starting you on the path to discovering NLP.

Influencing with Integrity

In *Influencing with Integrity* (Crown House Publishing, 1984), Genie Z. Laborde makes use of lots of line drawings and cartoons to create a book that's easy to read and understand. She simplifies a complex subject to provide the reader with a set

of state-of-the-art skills to use in all areas of communication. The straight-forward approach, with its focus on business applications, makes this book especially useful for people in the corporate world.

An Insider's Guide to Sub-Modalities

Richard Bandler and Will MacDonald's *An Insider's Guide to Sub-Modalities* (Meta Publications, 1989) is a relatively short book explaining how submodalities give meaning to the information you take in through your senses. Don't be deceived by this book's mere 116 pages; it includes transcripts of the authors' sessions working with clients plus 20 exercises for you to work through. A key NLP text, it shows how you can change an experience by changing the pictures, sounds, and feelings you associate with it.

The Magic of Metaphor

In *The Magic of Metaphor* (Crown House Publishing, 2001) and its sequel *More Magic of Metaphor* (2004), Nick Owen provides a collection of stories to simultaneously uplift you and promote positive feelings and confidence. They also challenge the very foundations of your ideas, attitudes, and beliefs to motivate and inspire you, provide nuggets that motivate you and offer you strategies for excellence. With stories giving numerous strategies for excellence, this book is extremely useful to people in professions as diverse as counseling, psychology, public speaking, management, and teaching.

Metaphors We Live By

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have done a brilliant job of going beyond merely describing how to use metaphors. *Metaphors We Live By* (University of Chicago Press, 1981) explains the different types of metaphor, the theory behind them and how the metaphors you use influence the results you create in your life. The authors present very complex material in an easy-to-understand way, which will help you take your ability to apply metaphors to a new level. You'll gain a better understanding of the "map of your world" as well as the maps other people live by. Just some of the areas in which you'll find this knowledge useful are in building rapport, diffusing conflict, and becoming more aware of how some of the ways in which you think could be holding you back.

Persuasion Skills Black Book

Rintu Basu's *Persuasion Skills Black Book* (Lean Marketing Press, 2009) is a practical book, written to help you master the language of persuasion in bite-sized chunks. The techniques are given further clarity by the use of everyday examples. This book is useful for a cross-section of people and situations, from teachers to sales-people to parents trying to deal with recalcitrant teenagers.

Presenting Magically

If you're a trainer or presenter, this elegantly written book by David Shephard and Tad James is a must for you. The techniques in *Presenting Magically* (Crown House Publishing, 2001) use NLP and accelerated learning and show you how to captivate your audience from the start. Practice the exercises in the book to model "natural-born" presenters and raise your presentation skills to mastery level.

Chapter **23**

Ten Films and TV Series That Demonstrate NLP in Action

In this chapter, we've selected ten films and TV series for you to watch. We found these uplifting, often thought-provoking and inspiring, but most of all we spotted aspects of NLP concepts in each of them. In the following sections, we identify some NLP features to illustrate the sorts of things you can look out for as you hone your NLP skills, even when relaxing at the cinema.

REMEMBER

The aim isn't just to enjoy the film. It's to give you a fresh perspective on your own life. As you spot these NLP themes, ask yourself, *How does this apply to me? What can I learn from this? What small change could I make in my own story?*

A Complete Unknown

Actors are experts at modeling characters, and when they take on real-life figures in a biographical film, they will go to great lengths to research their role and really "get under the skin" of the character they play. In *A Complete Unknown*, lead actor

Timothée Chalamet gives us a masterclass in his profession as he plays the young Bob Dylan. Not only does he look and sound the part, but his guitar and harmonica playing of some 40 Dylan songs — which he learned for the role — is simply superb. (The COVID-19 pandemic delayed production for several years, and this gave Chalamet space to develop his musical skills.) In addition, when filming finally got underway, the film's director, James Mangold, says that Chalamet was relentless in staying immersed in his role for the key three months of filming, to the point of containing any contact with the outside world that would have distracted him.

This film places the early part of Dylan's career under the spotlight — from his arrival as the complete unknown onto the New York folk scene in 1961 through to the emergence of his career as a rock star. While many of the events depicted use some creative license, the viewer gets the feel of New York in the early 1960s. Dylan's identity evolves as he embeds himself into the folk community, aligning himself with the experts with whom he establishes rapport, notably with Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, to build a reputation in his own right. (Monica Barbaro as Joan Baez and Edward Norton as Pete Seeger also give fine performances doing all of their own singing and guitar playing.)

Yet Dylan turns out to be a disruptor of that tight-knit community as he sheds the fixed identity bestowed upon him and challenges the beliefs of what folk music is all about. When he makes the controversial move of going all-out for electric guitar and rock instruments at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, he challenges what he sees as limiting beliefs. He dramatically breaks rapport with his mentors and fellow musicians to go his own way.

Dylan was a man restless for change. The film illustrates that, when you develop a new identity, those close to you may be the most reluctant to accept the new you and attempt to pigeonhole you back into the familiar one. You can find out more on modeling excellence in Chapter 19 and how to make change easier in Chapter 20.

Starring: Timothée Chalamet, Monica Barbaro, Edward Norton, and Elle Fanning. Director: James Mangold. Studio: Searchlight Pictures (2024).

Avatar

Before talking about the NLP features in the film, we want to suggest that James Cameron is a very unreasonable man, because, as George Bernard Shaw said, "Reasonable people adapt themselves to the world. Unreasonable people attempt to adapt the world to themselves. All progress, therefore, depends on unreasonable people."

Avatar took ten years of dedication and focus to bring to life. Cameron had to hold the vision for this film in his head for a decade. Even more remarkably, he and his team developed a virtual camera that elevated performance capture to new levels — creating a film world adapted to his vision and advancing the science of filmmaking for future generations.

If you have a visual preference (as we describe in Chapter 5), this film is a real treat, especially when watched in 3D.

At its heart, *Avatar* is about values, identity, and transformation. Jake Sully, a Marine confined to a wheelchair, takes on an avatar body to infiltrate the Na'vi, an indigenous people of Pandora. At first, he is loyal to the RDA (Resources Development Administration), a powerful, mega-corporation. But as he experiences the Na'vi's "map of the world" — one where all life is interconnected — his beliefs and values begin to shift.

The conflict comes from two competing maps. the RDA's "map of the world" is that Pandora is a resource to plunder and that that technology and firepower guarantees success. The Na'vi see themselves as part of Eywa, the planet's living network. Jake's transformation comes when he aligns with the Na'vi worldview. His physiology mirrors this shift: The moment he first runs in his avatar body, his state explodes into joy, confidence, and curiosity. This shows how state and physiology unlock new choices.

In the sequel, *Avatar: The Way of Water*, the visual spectacle is unparalleled, with underwater sequences that required groundbreaking technology and training, even for the actors. Beyond the technical brilliance, the narrative explores and deepens the themes of clashes of maps and values as well as transformation.

The Sully family must adapt to the oceanic world of the Metkayina clan. They realign not just their behaviors but their very identity — showing that congruence across logical levels creates resilience. Jake is no longer just a warrior; he is a father, whose values shift again — now driven by the protection of family above all else. This change transforms his leadership: He becomes less the warrior and more the father, leading from love as much as from strength.

Survival becomes possible only when unlikely allies — even across species — weave their strengths together, uniting in the defense of what they hold sacred.

Avatar illustrates that conflict comes from two competing maps and how shifting values and identity transform how you experience your world.

Starring: Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldaña, and Sigourney Weaver. Director: James Cameron. Studio: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation (2009) (2022).

Conclave

It's maybe a surprise that a political thriller about the election of a new pope could be a "blast," but watching a bunch of pompous elderly clerics fight it out hooked us in to the story of *Conclave* and offered a surprising ending that we won't spoil for you. (Don't check out the full storyline before watching it for yourself.) Not only is it a very enjoyable, award-winning film, but it's a reminder that communication, influencing, and group dynamics are as relevant in the Vatican as in the corporate boardroom or on the world political stage. Power struggles come to the fore, and we soon learn that the holy eminences are humanly fallible — so many of them have regrettable secrets.

Lead actor Ralph Fiennes gives a phenomenal performance as Cardinal Thomas Lawrence, a man wrestling with a personal crisis of faith plus the weighty responsibility for overseeing the conclave. One of the cardinals will soon assume a new identity as pope and head of the Catholic Church. While many of the cardinals may profess their humility by saying that they aren't worthy of being pope, in reality, they are ambitious and have their new name ready to hand just in case they turn out to be elected as the chosen one. This includes Lawrence, who has protested that he does not want the role yet ends up casting a vote for himself.

One of the NLP presuppositions you will recognize is that "People respond according to their map of the world." The cardinals vary in their beliefs about how the church should operate. Some argue for traditional values, some are more moderate, and still others see the need for modernization. AS NLP coaches, we encourage our clients to get comfortable with ambiguity rather than expecting certainty in life, and *Conclave* offers plenty of ambiguity.

Starring: Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, Isabella Rossellini, John Lithgow, Carlos Diehz, and Sergio Castellitto. Director: Edward Berger. Based on the 2016 novel by Robert Harris (Knopf). Production: Film Nation Entertainment (2024).

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

A thoroughly entertaining film about a teenager, Ferris Bueller (Matthew Broderick), who believes that, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." With this belief in mind, he decides to play truant and persuades his best friend, Cameron (Alan Ruck), to join him. Ferris

intends to use the day to help Cameron gain some self-esteem. This film is all about beliefs and taking responsibility for your actions. Ferris believes in himself and is adored by everyone, from his parents and school friends to the townspeople in general. The only exception is his principal, Ed Rooney, performed with manic intensity by Jeffrey Jones, and Ferris's sister, Jeanie Bueller, played by Jennifer Grey.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off is a brilliant illustration of some of the NLP presuppositions you can find in Chapter 2. Ferris's laissez-faire take on life violates the "map of the world" followed by his principal and sister — that is, how they believe people should behave and conform. Consequently, they're so focused on tripping him up that they miss the opportunity to adapt how they behave, discover new experiences, and learn to chill. The interesting point is to notice what people focus on and how it affects their lives. Ferris focuses on enjoying life, helping Cameron, and beating the system, and he sails through his day, achieving his goals. In contrast, his principal and sister are consumed with loathing for Ferris, and the former certainly ends up having a terribly painful day, in more ways than one. Principal Rooney is unable to recognize that the bad day he's experiencing is a result of his own behavior and continues to react to Ferris's actions according to his own "map of the world." With greater awareness, Principal Rooney may have understood the difference between failure and feedback.

Jeanie overcomes her angst during a hilarious conversation with a boy in the police station, played by Charlie Sheen, in which he suggests that Jeanie needs to focus more on sorting herself out and less on what her brother's doing.

The biggest transformation takes place in Cameron. At the start of the film Cameron is a victim, completely at the mercy of the people in his life: his father, of whom he's terrified, and particularly Ferris, to whom Cameron can't say no. By the end of the film when Cameron has "killed" his father's sports car, he admits that he allowed himself to be led by Ferris and could have said no at any time. Cameron realizes that he had freedom of choice all along. If he'd recognized this earlier, he wouldn't have been a victim to either his fears or his father. The best part is that Cameron has the courage to stand up to his father when he tells him about the car. Perhaps "having choice is better than not having choice."

Starring: Matthew Broderick, Alan Ruck, Mia Sara, Jeffrey Jones, and Jennifer Grey. Director: John Hughes. Studio: Paramount Pictures (1986).

Dune

Dune follows the arc of the classic hero's journey. Paul Atreides, heir to House Atreides, is forced from the security of his home into the desert planet of Arrakis. Vast sandworms and the spice Melange — "the greatest treasure in the Universe" — create an otherworldly setting. Paul encounters the Fremen, the blue-within-blue–eyed people deeply connected to the desert, and learns both their ways and his destiny.

In *Dune*, Paul survives the gom jabbar test by reframing fear. Using the mantra "fear is the mind-killer," he controls his state rather than succumbing to pain — a clear NLP illustration of how language and focus can shift physiology. His mother, Jessica, also demonstrates identity-level choice when she accepts responsibility for training Paul despite the risks: "I vowed never to regret my decision. I'll pay for my own mistakes."

Paul learns from the Fremen by modeling their behavior — walking without rhythm to avoid sandworms, adopting combat stances, respecting ritual. This shows the NLP principle that modeling excellence accelerates adaptation. Duke Leto's words echo another principle: "Without change, something sleeps inside us . . . The sleeper must awaken."

Villeneuve's two films chart the evolution of Paul's inner and outer worlds. In the first, survival demands that he master his state — reframing fear and modeling the Fremen's strategies to adapt to the desert. In the sequel, the focus shifts to identity and leadership: Paul unites the tribes and paints a compelling vision of a future that galvanizes belief, even as he wrestles with the shadow side of prophecy. Together, the films show how growth unfolds in layers — from mastering state to reframing beliefs to stepping into identity and destiny.

Dune: Part Two sees Paul step fully into leadership. Now known as Muad'dib, he unites the Fremen against imperial rule, anchoring a shared vision of freedom. His speeches carry the promise of achieving liberation, thereby aligning the group's identity and values. The film also explores the double edge of belief: Prophecy empowers Paul but also burdens him with expectation — echoing NLP's caution against letting beliefs harden into dogma.

Across both films, Paul's journey is one of transformation: from reluctant heir to a leader who reframes fear, embraces change, and learns to unite identity with purpose.

Starring: Timothée Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac, Josh Brolin, Stellan Skarsgård, and Zendaya. Director: Denis Villeneuve. Studios: Warner Bros./ Legendary Entertainment (2021 and 2023).

Field of Dreams

This classic film is about the fulfilment that comes from realizing one's dreams and the yearning that results when they remain unfulfilled. When you focus on what you love, rather than what you think you "have" to focus on, your ambitions are more easily realized.

Kevin Costner plays Ray Kinsella, a farmer who decides to build a baseball field in the middle of nowhere because he hears a voice say, "If you build it, he will come." The film employs a host of sensory references to heighten the atmosphere — sounds, smells, and feelings, the importance of which we discuss in Chapter 5 — as well as using metaphors (see Chapter 17) to the nth degree.

Kinsella and his family are a metaphor for you and the people you may experience in your life: the doctor, the relatives you have to tolerate, the conflicts you encounter in life and how you deal with them. Notice how Ray talks about his father. He seems angry that his father grew old because he allowed himself to get worn down by life. His response to the voice is almost a reaction to the mediocrity of his father's life and the fear that this chance may be his last to achieve something. Interestingly, Kinsella is running an *away-from* meta program in order to move *toward* his own dream. (Chapter 7 has more on these meta programs.)

Starring: Kevin Costner and Ray Liotta. Director: Phil Alden Robinson. Studio: Universal Studios (1989).

Forrest Gump

This is a much-loved Tom Hanks movie that stands the test of time with so many memorable quotes that it's hard to choose which to share. Let's start with "My momma always said, 'Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.'" It's a perfect use of metaphor for the unpredictability of life's ups and downs. It sweetens the tough times with a dose of gentle optimism that suggests that, although a particular chocolate wouldn't be your first choice, it's a given part of the mix. (See Chapter 17 for more on metaphors.)

The benevolent character of Forrest Gump, played by Hanks, is never explicitly explained as possibly autistic or neurodiverse in some way, and this is alluded to in the self-effacing statement "I'm not a smart man, but I know what love is," and also "Stupid is as stupid does." The latter is another gift of his mother's wisdom, reminding viewers to judge a person on their actual behavior rather than labeling them as stupid at an identity level. (We talk more about separating a

person's behavior from their identity in Chapter 11.) The clear subtext of the movie is that Gump is labeled by outsiders as stupid. Forrest's commitment to core values of love, family, loyalty, integrity, and friendship show through the plot line regardless of any intellectual prowess.

He's also a brilliant runner. He discovers this when he and his friend, Jenny, are walking home from school, and Forrest is set upon by bullies. Jenny encourages Forrest to "Run, Forrest, run away," and then encourages him by saying iconic words, "Run, Forrest, run." This demonstrates the power of physical activity to change one's situation. In NLP, we often remind clients that you change your emotional state when you move your body. Describing a long run, Forrest says, "I had a feeling that if I ever stopped running, . . . well I'd be in trouble." In fact, he runs for more than 15,000 miles and three years.

The poignant friendship with his dear school friend Jenny is described by Gump as, "We were like peas and carrots." Another deceptively simple metaphor of the relationship between the leading characters of Forrest and Jenny.

Starring: Tom Hanks, Robin Wright, Sally Field, Gary Sinese, and Mykelti Williamson. Director: Robert Zemeckis. Studio: Paramount Pictures (1994).

Ted Lasso

Ted Lasso from Apple TV succeeds not just as easy-to-watch, heartwarming entertainment but delivers lessons in life and leadership that left viewers craving a fourth series. It's an American sports comedy-drama based on characters from NBC Sports.

The storyline centers on a chirpy and naive American college football coach hired for a fictional professional English football team in the beautiful, historic town of Richmond on Thames, England. Unbeknown to Ted, he has been brought in as the coach most likely to fail; his boss, Rebecca, has plotted revenge on her unfaithful ex-husband and former owner of the club, Rupert. Ted has very limited technical knowledge about the English game yet succeeds against the odds by creating a shift in mindset and culture. Each day he bakes delicious biscuits for the boss and colleagues!

One NLP message you can take from *Ted Lasso* is in the power of beliefs. When Ted arrives, he places a yellow sign in the locker room that simply says, "Believe." It's his way of planting the seeds of faith in a team that needed to believe in itself, in

him, and in each other. He says, "I believe in hope. I believe in *believe*. Every day is a chance to be better than we were the day before." He wins the hearts and minds of players, the club owner, fans, and colleagues throughout the club with his innate curiosity and nonjudgmental approach to life. He's a model of true leadership and integrity to all. The players cherish the yellow sign, and even when it gets pulled down and torn into pieces, they keep the pieces as omens of good luck worth holding onto, and eventually, the sign is reinstated.

Ted epitomizes the NLP approach that behavioral flexibility is an essential ingredient to success. He sees the potential in people and is completely open to questioning his own views and approach: "I think you may be so sure a person is one thing that sometimes you completely miss who they really are."

Starring: Jason Sudeikis, Hannah Waddingham, Phil Dunster, Brett Goldstein, Brendan Hunt, Nick Mohammed, and Juno Temple. Studio: various production companies for Apple TV. Series one (2020).

Inside Out

Inside Out is Pixar's ingenious dive into the mind of 11-year-old Riley. Her emotions — Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust — are personified, showing how inner states drive behavior. At first, Joy dominates, convinced that Sadness is a problem to be eliminated. But when Riley's family moves across the country, Sadness begins to influence her core memories, and Riley spirals into conflict.

This film is an allegory for emotional intelligence. Joy's attempt to banish Sadness backfires. When she resists, the "parts" of Riley's inner world fight each other, creating discord. NLP calls this *parts conflict*: When aspects of the self pull in different directions, energy drains, and resilience drops.

The breakthrough comes when Joy realizes Sadness has a vital role. Only through Sadness can Riley process loss, receive comfort, and reconnect with others. This is not textbook NLP Parts Integration, but it illustrates the principle: When parts are integrated instead of opposed, wholeness and balance return.

The most poignant moment comes with Bing Bong, Riley's forgotten imaginary friend. When Joy and Bing Bong try to escape the Memory Dump, Bing Bong sacrifices himself, staying behind so Joy can escape and return to the control center, thereby allowing Riley to keep going. His act embodies values of loyalty, love, and purpose.

In the end, Riley's mind rebuilds with more complex core memories — joy tinged with sadness, anger balanced with love. The message is clear: Emotional richness, not suppression, creates resilience, and growth.

Starring: Amy Poehler, Phyllis Smith, Bill Hader, Lewis Black, and Mindy Kaling. Director: Pete Docter. Studio: Walt Disney Pictures/Pixar Animation Studios (2015).

Stand and Deliver

Nothing to do with Adam and the Ants, but instead a terrific film based on a true story of a high-school teacher motivating his class of East Los Angeles barrio youngsters to believe in themselves and overcome stereotyping. What's really interesting, and adds to the humor, is how Jaime Escalante, played by Edward James Olmos, paces his students to lead them to learning calculus (check out Chapter 6 for more on pacing people successfully). He uses similar gestures and body language to those of the students and uses rap to teach them simple mathematics. With a well-formed outcome in mind, Escalante shows considerable flexibility in his behavior.

When Escalante can't teach computing because of a lack of computers, he chooses to teach math instead. When the class is suspected of cheating, because the students have done so well, Escalante demonstrates flexibility in his behavior and persuades his class to take the test again. Curiously, other teachers are against the students being taught math or aspiring to better themselves. They're driven by fear of failure. The other teachers are afraid that, if the students fail, it will knock what little self-esteem they have.

One key lesson to take from this film is to be careful of trying to protect people from what you may see as their weakness. You may, in fact, be colluding in keeping them trapped in their comfort zone and stopping them from growing as a result of the filters you're applying to the situation (turn to Chapter 8 for more on communication).

Starring: Edward James Olmos. Director: Ramón Menéndez. Studio: Warner Studios (1988).

NLP ON THE BIG AND SMALL SCREEN

TRY THIS

The preceding sections give you a taste of the NLPisms to look for in a film or TV series, so why don't you now try your hand at sharpening your own NLP skills. Whenever you sit down to watch a film or TV program, see whether you can spot the items from the following list of suggestions:

- Which NLP presuppositions are demonstrated?

- What do you notice about rapport?

- What maps of the world are depicted? How do they match up to your reality?

- What do you notice about the words the characters say, their use of language, and the meta programs they run?

- What effect does the soundtrack at different points in the production have on your state of mind?

- What message is conveyed about dreams, goals, and outcomes?

- Are the characters victims of circumstances and, if so, what's the process by which they take control of their lives?

- What beliefs and values are demonstrated in the storyline?

- How do the characters pace and lead each other?

- Which characters, if any, display flexibility in their behavior?

- What's the visual impact of the production? How do you experience the kinesthetic dimensions of feelings and touch, plus a sense of taste or smell?

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About the Authors

Romilla Ready helps people go beyond distress, turn stress to their advantage, and rediscover their zest for life. She's a Breakthrough Coach, author, and trainer who has co-authored *Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies* and the *NLP Workbook For Dummies,* making NLP accessible to a wider audience and showing people how to apply it in clear, practical ways.

Having navigated emotional, financial, and physical challenges, Romilla understands how distress strains every relationship — with oneself, family, colleagues, friends, and the wider community — often fueling conflict, burnout, and isolation. Her career in high-stress, customer-facing roles showed her how poor communication magnifies stress, sparking her passion for equipping others to communicate with clarity, confidence, and compassion.

She is the architect and creator of her signature programs, Relationship Wizardry and Beyond Distress, which blend the science of the mind and emotions with the ancient wisdom of Hawaii. These approaches guide people to live in flow with their values, moving beyond survival and quiet desperation to living with purpose, alignment, and joy.

Her mission: helping people become more resilient, influential, and impactful — so they can thrive in all aspects of their lives.

You can reach Romilla in the following ways:

Contact: `Romilla@ReadySolutionsGroup.com`

LinkedIn: `www.linkedin.com/in/romillaready`

`https://online.goalmapping.com/romillaready`

Kate Burton is an international accredited NLP master coach, author, and facilitator who challenges people to create purposeful lives that are sustainable and fun. Her business career began in corporate advertising and marketing with Hewlett-Packard. Since then, she has worked with numerous organizations across industries and cultures to accelerate their growth and success. She thrives on supporting people in boosting their self-awareness, confidence, and well-being. Her belief is that people all have unique talents, abilities, and core values, and the way forward is to build on their strengths rather than changing to conform to some ideal model. The skill lies in honoring their identity to the full.

In addition to co-authoring *Neuro-linguistic Programming For Dummies* and the *Neuro-linguistic Programming Workbook For Dummies* with Romilla, Kate has written a popular coaching guide to resilience and career success: *Live Life. Love Work,* published by Capstone, as well as *Coaching with NLP For Dummies.* She co-authored *Confidence For Dummies* with Brinley Platts. Her latest interest lies in leaving a legacy of creative thinking and communication skills for the younger generations whom she mentors.

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