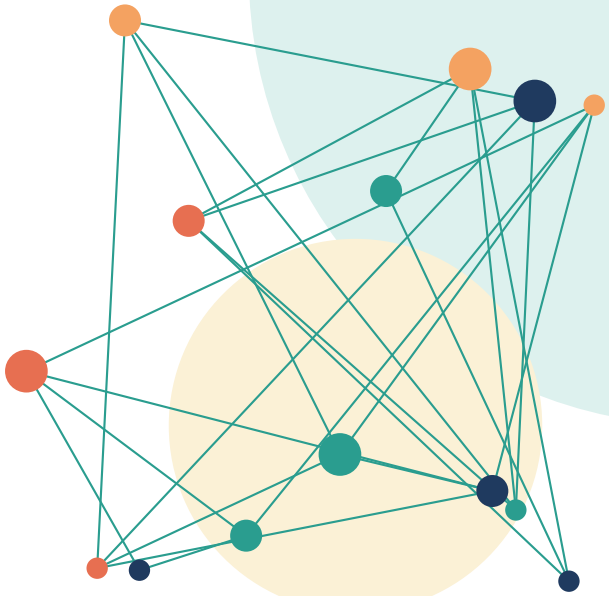


A VISUAL SUMMARY

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)

Origins, core models, techniques, applications and what the evidence says

Neuro | Linguistic | Programming

November 2026

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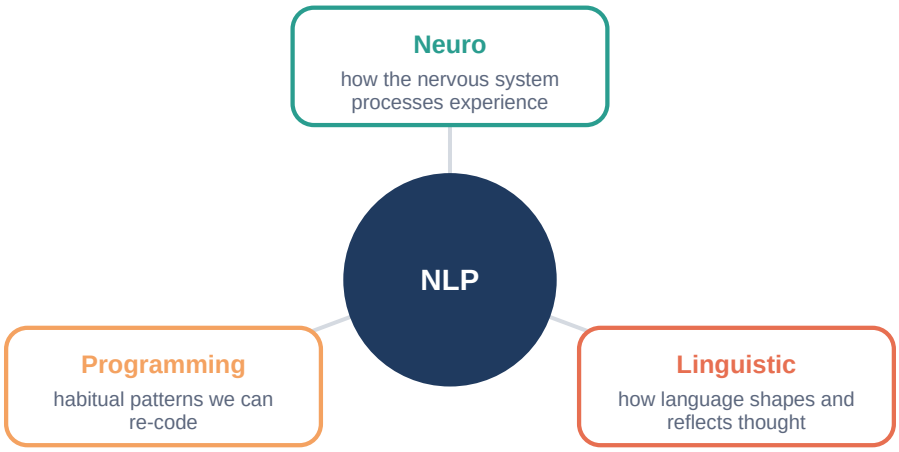
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PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

What is NLP?

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is an approach to communication, personal development and psychotherapy created in the 1970s. It claims that there is a connection between neurological processes (*neuro*), language (*linguistic*) and learned patterns of behaviour (*programming*), and that these patterns can be changed to achieve specific goals.

NLP grew out of an attempt to **model** the language and behaviour of highly effective therapists, then package what they did into learnable techniques. Today it is taught widely in coaching, sales, leadership and self-help, though it is **not accepted** as an evidence-based psychological therapy.



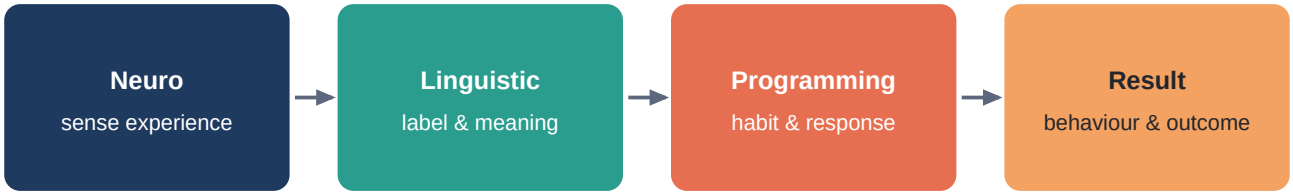
One-line definition
NLP is often described as 'the study of the structure of subjective experience' - less a single theory and more a toolkit of models and techniques for noticing how people think, and changing it.

PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

The Three Components

The name breaks down into three ideas. Each one maps onto a set of NLP tools covered later in this summary.

Component	Meaning	Key idea	Related tools
Neuro	Our experience is filtered through the five senses and the nervous system.	We think in pictures, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes.	Representational systems, submodalities, states
Linguistic	Language is how we code, organise and communicate experience.	The words we use reveal - and shape - our internal maps.	Meta-model, Milton model, reframing
Programming	Thoughts and behaviours run in learned sequences, like programs.	Unhelpful sequences can be interrupted and re-coded.	Strategies, anchoring, swish, timeline work



Why the combination matters

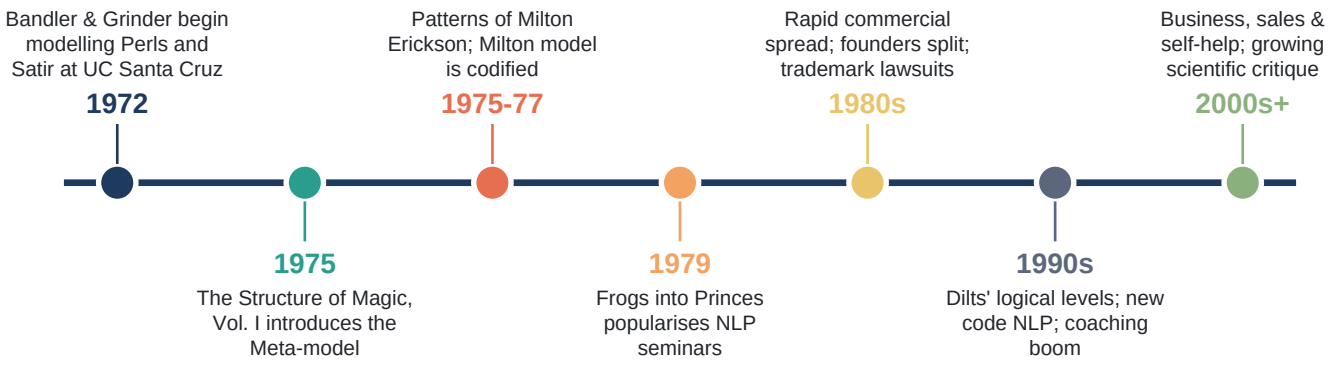
- Change the **words** you use and you can change how an experience is represented internally.
- Change the **internal representation** (e.g. make an image smaller) and the feeling may change.
- Change the **feeling** and you open up different behavioural choices.
- Repeat the new response and it becomes the new **program**.

> **Key takeaway**
> NLP's name is its theory in miniature: experience comes in through the senses (neuro), gets coded in language (linguistic), and settles into repeatable habits (programming). Every technique in this summary targets one or more of these three layers.

PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

Origins & History

NLP began at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where linguistics professor **John Grinder** and student **Richard Bandler** studied the work of exceptional therapists and tried to codify their patterns.



The setting

A 1970s counter-culture campus; Gestalt, family therapy and hypnotherapy were all fashionable.

The method

Watch, listen and copy experts until you get the same results, then teach it.

The legacy

A huge training industry with many competing schools and no single governing body.

Key takeaway

NLP was born from modelling a few gifted therapists rather than from laboratory research. That origin explains both its practical, technique-driven style and its long-running tension with academic psychology.

PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

Founders & Key Contributors

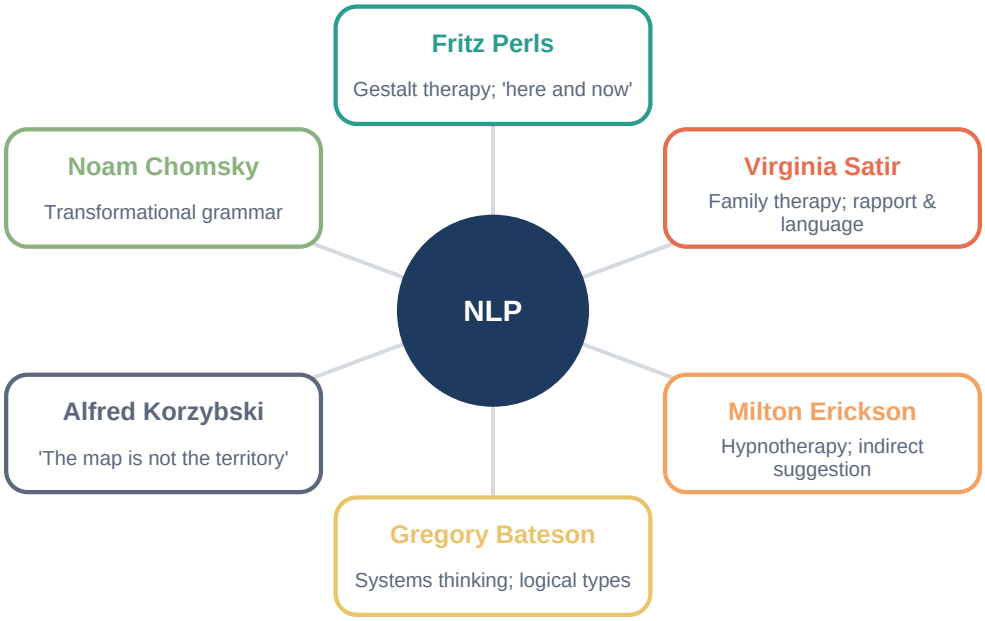
Person	Role in NLP	Notable contribution
Richard Bandler	Co-founder	Submodalities, swish pattern, Design Human Engineering
John Grinder	Co-founder (linguist)	Meta-model, 'New Code' NLP with Judith DeLozier
Frank Pucelik	Early collaborator	Ran early practice groups that tested techniques
Judith DeLozier	Early developer	New Code NLP, somatic and systemic approaches
Leslie Cameron-Bandler	Early developer	Meta-programs, imperative self-analysis
Robert Dilts	Developer & author	Logical levels, belief change, modelling geniuses
David Gordon	Developer	Therapeutic metaphors, experiential array
Tad James	Developer	Time Line Therapy®
Connirae & Steve Andreas	Developers	Core Transformation, popular NLP books
Michael Hall	Developer	Neuro-Semantics, meta-states

Did you know?
Bandler and Grinder parted ways around 1980. Bandler later sued over rights to the NLP name; the case settled in 2000 with the term 'NLP' left free for anyone to use - which is why quality and standards vary so much between trainers.

PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

The People NLP Modelled

NLP is largely a synthesis. Its founders borrowed heavily from therapists and thinkers who were active at the time.

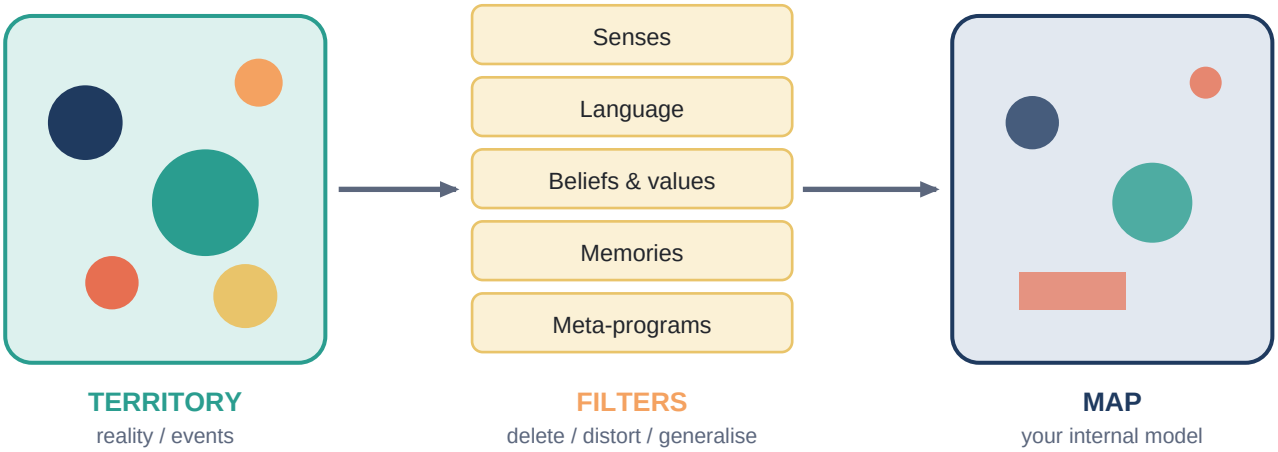


Source	What NLP took from it
Gestalt therapy (Perls)	Empty-chair style dialogue; focus on present experience; parts work
Family therapy (Satir)	Rapport, matching, communication categories, reframing
Ericksonian hypnosis	Artfully vague language (Milton model), metaphors, pacing & leading
General semantics	Map/territory distinction; language as abstraction of experience
Transformational grammar	Deep vs surface structure, which became the Meta-model

PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

The Map Is Not the Territory

The central idea of NLP comes from Alfred Korzybski: no one responds to reality directly. We respond to our **internal map** of reality, built by filtering the world through our senses, language, beliefs and memories.



Implications

- Two people can live through the same event and hold different 'truths'.
- Problems often come from a map that is too narrow, not from the world itself.
- Changing the map (more options, new meanings) changes behaviour.
- Respecting another's map is the basis of rapport.

Example

A manager gives brief feedback. Employee A's map: *'she's busy and trusts me'*. Employee B's map: *'she's unhappy with my work'*. Same territory, two maps, two very different emotional responses.

> **Key takeaway**
> When you feel stuck, ask: 'Is this the territory, or just my map of it?' Adding one alternative interpretation is often enough to open up new choices.

PART 1 · FOUNDATIONS

The Presuppositions of NLP

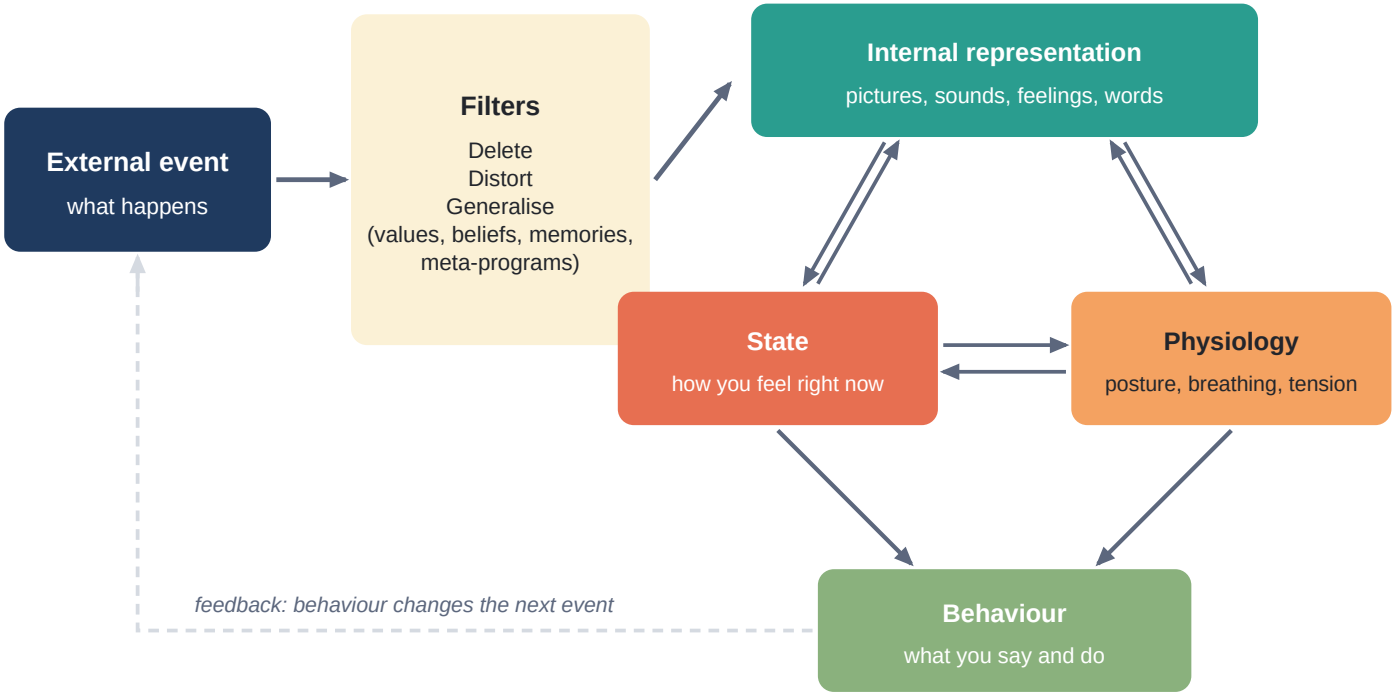
NLP rests on a set of working assumptions called **presuppositions**. They are not claimed to be literally true; they are useful beliefs to act 'as if' they were true.

#	Presupposition	What it means in practice
1	The map is not the territory.	People respond to their perception, not to reality.
2	Respect the other person's model of the world.	Understanding comes before influence.
3	Every behaviour has a positive intention.	Look for the need behind unhelpful actions.
4	The meaning of communication is the response you get.	Adjust your message if it isn't landing.
5	There is no failure, only feedback.	Treat results as information for the next attempt.
6	Mind and body are one system.	Change posture or breathing to shift state, and vice versa.
7	People have all the resources they need.	Access existing strengths rather than 'fix' people.
8	If one person can do something, others can learn it.	The basis of modelling excellence.
9	The person with the most flexibility influences the system.	More options = more control.
10	People make the best choice available to them.	Widen choices instead of blaming.
11	Resistance signals a lack of rapport.	Pace more before you try to lead.
12	Having a choice is better than having no choice.	Aim to add options, not remove them.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

The NLP Communication Model

The NLP communication model describes how an outside event becomes an inside experience. The event passes through our filters, becomes an **internal representation**, which interacts with our **state** and **physiology**, and finally produces **behaviour**.



Stage	Question to ask yourself
External event	What actually happened - what would a video camera record?
Filters	What did I delete, distort or generalise?
Internal representation	What picture, sound or self-talk am I running?
State & physiology	How is that representation making me feel and hold my body?
Behaviour	Given that state, what did I do - and what else could I do?

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

Deletion, Distortion & Generalisation

Three universal processes shape every map. They are essential - without them we would be overwhelmed - but they also create limitations.



Selectively attend; leave out most of the 2+ million bits of sensory input arriving each second.

Shift experience: imagine, interpret, assume meaning, mind-read, catastrophise.

Draw global conclusions from one or a few experiences: 'always', 'never', 'everyone'.

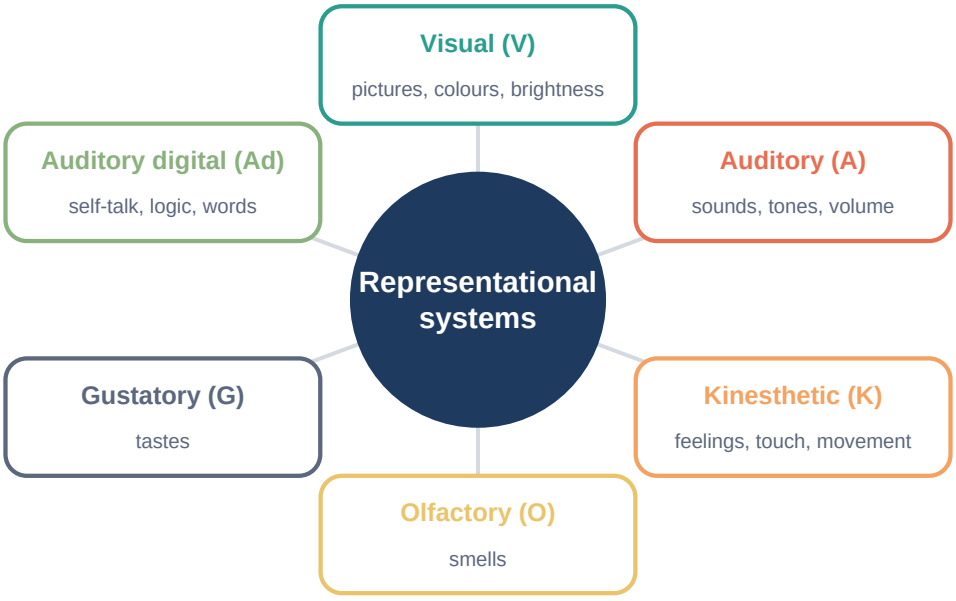
Process	Useful when...	Limiting when...	Example statement
Deletion	Focusing on one conversation in a noisy room	Missing positive feedback entirely	'Nobody helped me.'
Distortion	Imagining a better future; creativity	Mind-reading others' motives	'He's late, so he doesn't respect me.'
Generalisation	Learning that doors open with handles	One bad interview means 'I always fail'	'I can never speak in public.'

Accuracy note
Commonly cited NLP figures (e.g. '2 million bits in, 134 bits processed') are popularised estimates, not precise neuroscience. The underlying point - that attention is highly selective - is well established.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

Representational Systems (VAKOG)

NLP proposes that we represent experience internally using the same channels we use to perceive it. The acronym **VAKOG** covers the five senses, with **Ad** (auditory digital) added for internal dialogue.



System	Typical inner experience	Common in...
Visual	Remembering a face, imagining a holiday	Planning, design, recall of places
Auditory	Replaying a song or a conversation	Music, rhetoric, listening
Kinesthetic	Feeling butterflies, warmth, tension	Sport, emotions, hands-on skills
Olfactory / Gustatory	Smell of coffee, taste of lemon	Strong emotional memory triggers
Auditory digital	Talking to yourself, making lists	Analysis, logic, rumination

Key takeaway
Use sensory language deliberately: describe ideas so people can see them, hear them and feel them. Rich multi-sensory description tends to be more vivid and memorable for every listener.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

Preferred Systems & Predicates

NLP claims people favour one system and reveal it through **predicates** - sensory words in everyday speech. Matching someone's predicates is taught as a way to build rapport.

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Auditory digital
see, look, view	hear, listen, sound	feel, touch, grasp	think, know, understand
clear, bright, focus	loud, tune, ring	solid, heavy, smooth	logical, process, decide
'I see what you mean'	'That rings a bell'	'I get a feel for it'	'That makes sense'
'Looks good to me'	'Sounds right'	'I'm under pressure'	'Let me consider it'
'Picture this...'	'Tell me more'	'Get in touch'	'Describe in detail'
'Show me'	'Loud and clear'	'Hold on'	'Statistically speaking'

Matching in action

Customer: *'I just can't picture how this would look in our office.'*
Mismatch: 'Let me talk you through the specs.'
Match: 'Let me show you a photo of a similar setup.'

Evidence check
Research has found no reliable evidence that people have a fixed 'preferred representational system', or that matching it improves outcomes. Treat it as a listening exercise, not a diagnosis.

Key takeaway
Listening for the exact words people use - and reflecting some of them back - is a simple, low-risk way to show you are paying attention, whatever the theory behind it.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

Eye Accessing Cues

One of NLP's best-known claims is that eye movements reveal which representational system a person is using. The chart below shows the classic model for a 'normally organised' right-handed person.

Visual constructed (Vc)
imagining new images

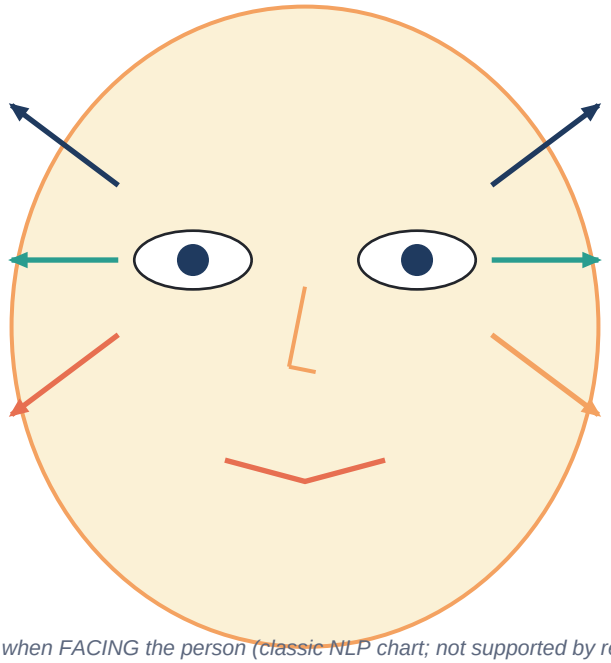
Visual remembered (Vr)
recalling seen images

Auditory constructed (Ac)
creating new sounds

Auditory remembered (Ar)
recalling heard sounds

Kinesthetic (K)
feelings, body sensations

Auditory digital (Ad)
internal dialogue



As seen when FACING the person (classic NLP chart; not supported by research)

What the research says

Controlled studies (e.g. Wiseman et al., 2012) found that eye movements do **not** reliably indicate whether someone is remembering or constructing - so they cannot be used as a lie detector. Many NLP trainers now present this model as historical rather than predictive.

Key takeaway

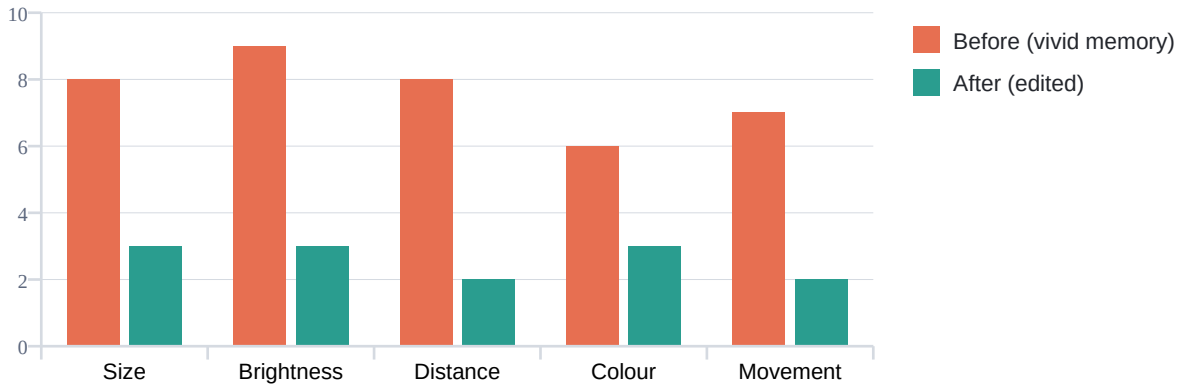
Watching someone's face for signs of effort, recall or emotion is a reasonable listening skill - but never draw conclusions about honesty or thinking style from eye direction alone.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

Submodalities

If representational systems are the 'channels', **submodalities** are the fine settings on each channel - brightness, volume, temperature. NLP holds that changing these settings changes the emotional intensity of a memory.

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Colour or black & white	Loud or quiet	Hot or cold
Bright or dim	Fast or slow tempo	Heavy or light
Near or far	Location of sound	Location in body
Large or small	Pitch: high or low	Pressure: strong or soft
Framed or panoramic	Mono or stereo	Moving or still
Moving or still image	Clear or muffled	Texture: rough or smooth
Associated or dissociated	Inner voice: whose?	Intensity 0-10



Illustrative: a client rates the vividness (0-10) of a stressful memory before and after making the image smaller, dimmer, further away, black-and-white and still.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

Working with Submodalities

Several classic techniques build directly on submodality shifts.

Mapping across

Compare the submodalities of something you feel 'unsure' about with something you're 'certain' of, then move the unsure image into the certain settings.

Contrastive analysis

Find which submodality makes the biggest difference (the 'driver'), e.g. distance.

Like to dislike

Shift a craving (chocolate) into the submodalities of something disliked.

Volume down

Turn the critical inner voice into a cartoon voice or turn its volume down.

Dissociate

See a bad memory as if watching yourself from outside the scene.

Associate

Step into a good memory: see through your own eyes, feel it fully.



Want to...	Common submodality shift
Reduce an unpleasant feeling	Make the image smaller, dimmer, further away, still, black & white
Increase motivation	Make the goal image bigger, brighter, closer, moving, in colour
Quieten self-criticism	Lower the volume, slow it down, move the voice further away
Feel more certain	Move the image to where 'certain' things sit in your visual field

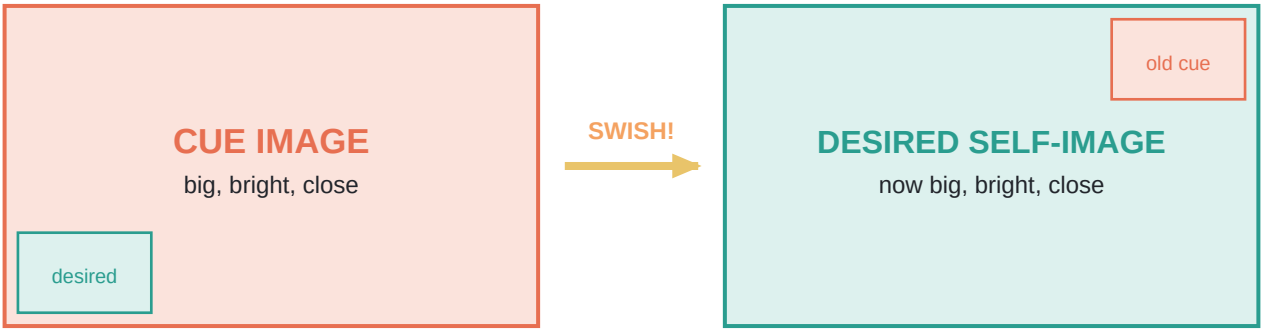
Key takeaway

Many people notice that a memory feels different when they picture it smaller, further away or in black and white. Experiment with your own images and notice which setting makes the biggest difference.

PART 2 · HOW WE PROCESS EXPERIENCE

The Swish Pattern

The swish, developed by Richard Bandler, is a fast visual technique for changing an unwanted habit or reaction by redirecting the brain from a cue image to a compelling self-image.



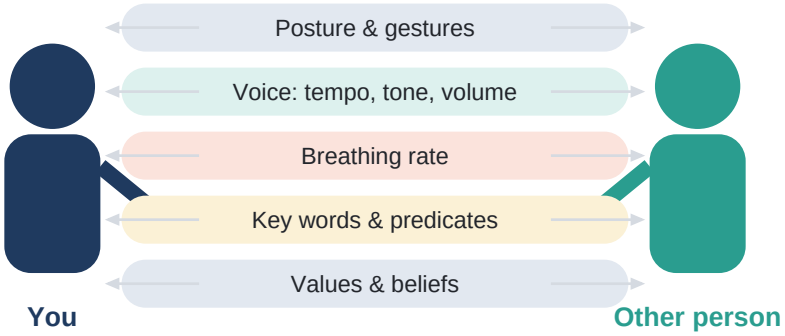
1. Before the swish **2. After (repeat 5-7 times, fast)**

1	**Identify the cue**	what you see just before the habit starts (e.g. hand reaching for phone)
2	**Create the desired self-image**	the 'you' who no longer needs the habit - dissociated, attractive
3	**Set up**	cue image big & bright; desired image tiny & dark in a corner
4	**Swish**	rapidly shrink the cue as the desired image expands to fill the screen
5	**Break state and repeat**	clear the screen; repeat 5-7 times, faster each time
6	**Test**	try to recall the cue - the desired image should now appear automatically

PART 3 · RAPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Rapport

Rapport is a sense of mutual trust and responsiveness. NLP teaches that it can be built deliberately by **matching** and **mirroring** aspects of another person's behaviour - subtly, and with respect.



Technique	How it works	Watch out for
Mirroring	Reflect body language as in a mirror (their left = your right)	Copying too obviously feels like mimicry
Matching	Adopt similar posture, gestures or energy	Matching negative states such as anger
Cross-over matching	Match one channel with another, e.g. tap in time with their breathing	Over-complicating it
Voice matching	Similar pace, volume, tone and rhythm	Mimicking accents
Backtracking	Repeat their key words exactly	Parroting everything

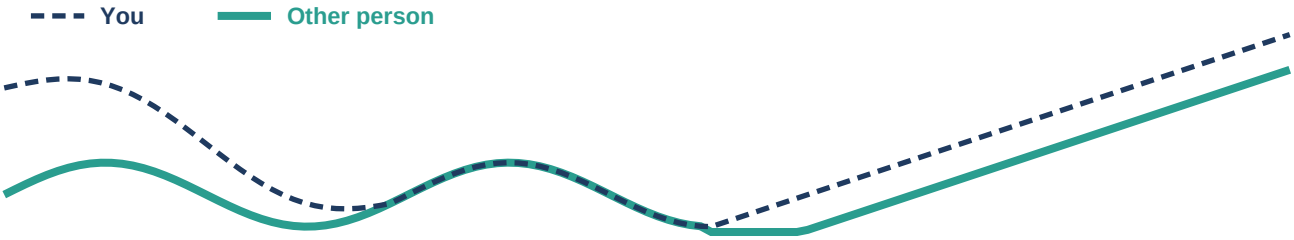
Note: psychological research on behavioural mimicry does show that unconscious, natural mimicry is associated with liking; deliberate, mechanical copying can backfire when noticed.

> **Key takeaway**
> Rapport grows from genuine attention and curiosity. Matching works best as a by-product of really listening, not as a mechanical trick.

PART 3 · RAPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Pacing & Leading

Pacing means meeting people where they are - matching their state, language and pace. Once rapport exists, **leading** means gently shifting your own behaviour and seeing whether they follow.



1. MATCH / PACE	2. RAPPORT	3. LEAD - do they follow?

Verbal pacing

'You've had a long week, you've been juggling three deadlines, and you're probably wondering if this meeting is worth your time...' (three true statements = pacing)

'...so let's make the next 20 minutes count.' (lead)

Non-verbal pacing

- Match a fast speaker's tempo, then slow down gradually.
- Match an anxious person's energy slightly, then relax your breathing.
- If they don't follow, return to pacing - rapport isn't strong enough yet.

Context	Pace (meet them)	Lead (move together)
Upset customer	Match urgency: 'This is really frustrating, and you need it fixed today.'	Gradually slow your voice and move to next steps
Tired class	Acknowledge the energy: 'It's Friday afternoon...'	Introduce a short, active task
Sceptical client	State their doubts accurately before your case	Offer a small, low-risk trial

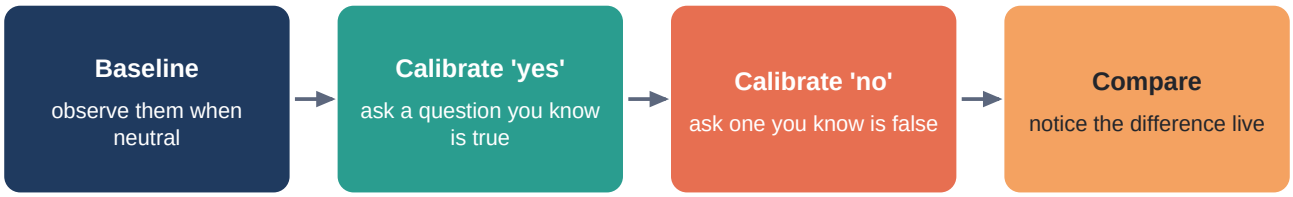
Key takeaway
Acknowledge where someone is before asking them to move. 'Pace, pace, pace, lead' is a useful rule of thumb in teaching, sales and difficult conversations alike.

PART 3 · RAPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Sensory Acuity & Calibration

Sensory acuity is the ability to notice small changes in another person. **Calibration** means learning what those changes mean *for that particular person* by comparing them against a known baseline.

Channel	What to observe	Possible meaning (calibrate, don't assume)
Skin colour	Flushing, paling	Emotional arousal, embarrassment
Breathing	Rate, depth, location (chest vs belly)	Stress vs relaxation
Facial muscles	Tension around eyes, jaw, mouth	Concentration, disagreement
Lips	Fullness, tightening	Withholding a response
Voice	Pitch, speed, hesitation	Certainty or doubt
Posture	Leaning in/out, symmetry	Engagement, defensiveness



Practice drill
Exercise: ask a partner to think of someone they like, then someone they dislike. Watch closely. Then ask them to think of one of the two without telling you - can you tell which?

Key takeaway
Calibrate to the individual, never to a generic chart. Crossed arms may mean defensiveness in one person and simply feeling cold in another.

PART 3 · RAPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Well-Formed Outcomes

NLP's goal-setting framework turns vague wishes into outcomes that are motivating and achievable. A goal is 'well-formed' when it passes every check below.

Condition	Key question	Weak example	Well-formed example
Stated in the positive	What do you want (not want to avoid)?	'Stop being nervous'	'Feel calm and present when presenting'
Self-initiated	Is it within your control?	'My boss will promote me'	'I'll lead two projects this year'
Sensory specific	What will you see, hear, feel?	'Be healthier'	'Run 5 km in 30 minutes'
Context	Where, when, with whom?	'Be more confident'	'Speak up in Monday meetings'
Resources	What do you need?	-	'Coach, 3 hrs/week, running shoes'
Ecology	What will it cost? Who else is affected?	-	'Training won't clash with family time'
Evidence	How will you know you've got it?	-	'Race result and how my knees feel'
First step	What will you do first?	-	'Book a gym session tomorrow'

Ecology check
Ecology is NLP's word for checking that a change fits the whole person and system - 'Is there any part of you that objects to having this?'

PART 3 · RAPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Outcome Frame vs Problem Frame

NLP encourages shifting attention from the problem (why it happened, whose fault it is) to the outcome (what you want and how to get there).

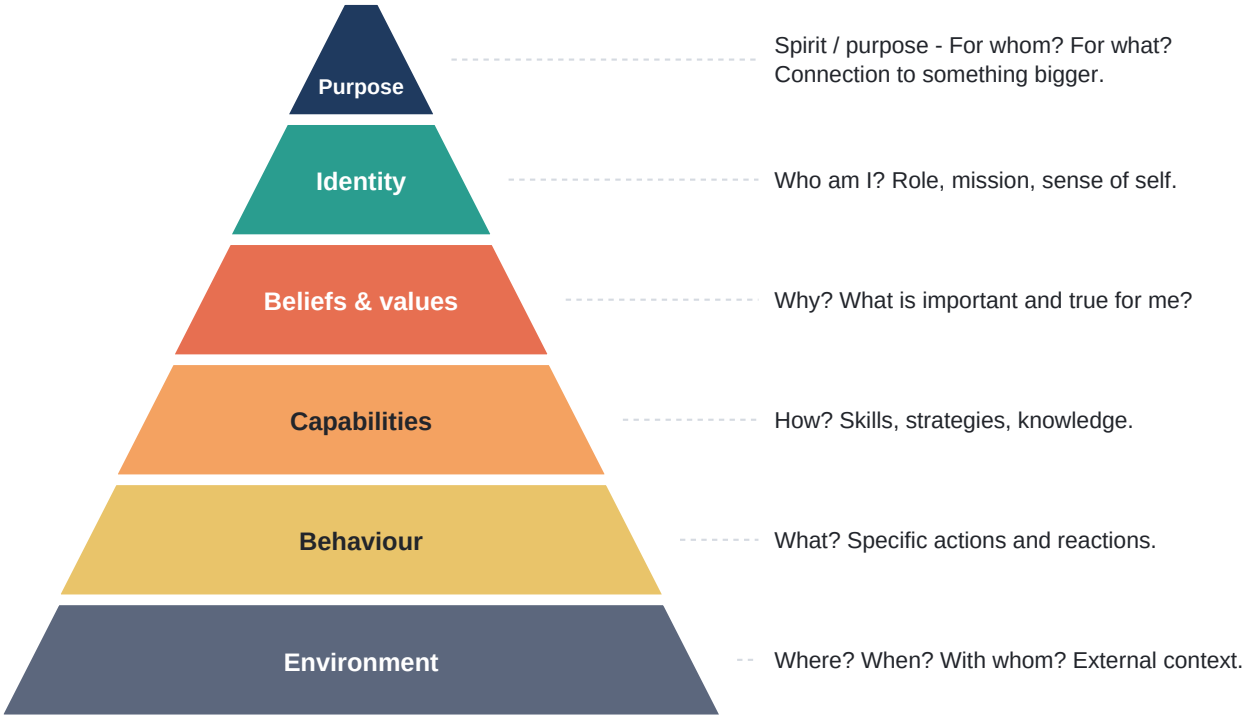
Problem frame	Outcome frame
What's wrong?	What do you want?
Why do you have this problem?	How will you know when you've achieved it?
How long has it been a problem?	What resources do you already have?
Whose fault is it?	What's the first step?
Why haven't you solved it yet?	What will having it allow you to do?
Focus: past, blame, limitation	Focus: future, choice, resources



PART 3 · RAPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Dilts' Logical Levels

Developed by Robert Dilts from Gregory Bateson's work, the **logical levels** model describes layers at which change can happen. A change at a higher level tends to ripple down to those below.



Level	Example: 'I can't do this here'
Environment	'I can't do this **here**.' (the office is too noisy)
Behaviour	'I can't **do** this here.' (no action plan)
Capability	'I **can't** do this here.' (lack of skill)
Belief	'I can't do this here' - *because it isn't worth it*
Identity	'**I** can't do this.' (not the kind of person who...)

PART 4 · LANGUAGE MODELS

The Meta-Model

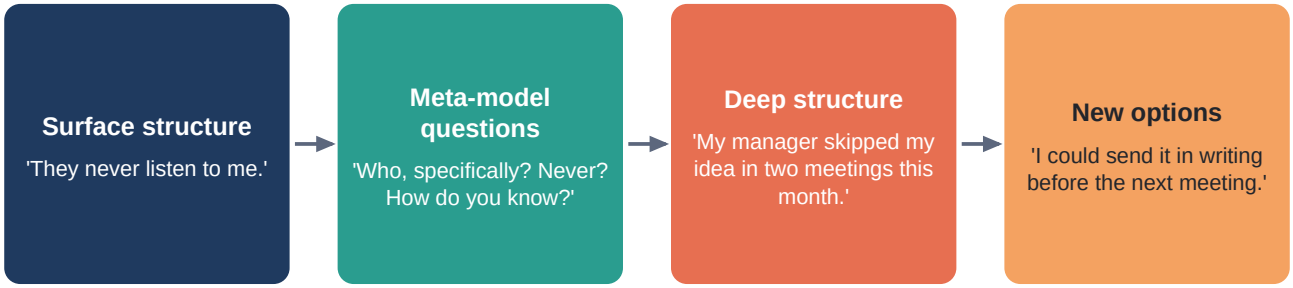
The Meta-model (1975) is a set of questions that recover information lost through deletion, distortion and generalisation. It moves from vague **surface structure** toward the fuller **deep structure** of experience.

Pattern	Example	Challenge question
DELETIONS		
Simple deletion	'I'm upset.'	About what, specifically?
Comparative deletion	'It's better to wait.'	Better than what?
Unspecified verb	'He hurt me.'	How, specifically?
Unspecified noun	'They don't listen.'	Who, specifically?
Nominalisation	'Our communication is poor.'	How are we communicating poorly?
DISTORTIONS		
Mind reading	'You don't care about me.'	How do you know that?
Cause-effect	'You make me angry.'	How does what I do cause you to feel angry?
Complex equivalence	'You're late - you don't respect me.'	How does being late mean no respect?
Lost performative	'It's wrong to change your mind.'	According to whom?
Presupposition	'When will you stop wasting time?'	What leads you to believe I'm wasting time?
GENERALISATIONS		
Universal quantifier	'Nobody ever helps.'	Nobody? Ever? Has there been an exception?
Modal operator of necessity	'I must finish today.'	What would happen if you didn't?
Modal operator of possibility	'I can't say no.'	What stops you? What would happen if you did?

PART 4 · LANGUAGE MODELS

Using the Meta-Model Well

Firing questions at people can feel like an interrogation. Skilled use combines the Meta-model with rapport and a clear outcome for the conversation.



Moving from a vague surface statement to the specific experience behind it usually reveals options the generalisation was hiding.

Do	Don't	Best uses
Soften: 'I'm curious, what specifically...?' Match tone. Pick the one pattern that matters most.	Challenge every pattern. Use it in casual chat. Use it to 'win' arguments.	Coaching, requirements gathering, negotiation, clarifying feedback, medical history taking.

Mini case

Client: 'Everyone thinks I'm useless.' → **Coach:** 'Everyone?' → 'Well, my team lead.' → 'How do you know he thinks that?' → 'He rewrote my report.' → 'How does rewriting a report mean you're useless?' → the global belief shrinks to a specific, solvable issue.

> **Key takeaway**
> Use one well-chosen 'specifically' question at a time, delivered with warmth. Precision plus rapport is what turns a challenge into a breakthrough.

PART 4 · LANGUAGE MODELS

The Milton Model

Named after hypnotherapist Milton H. Erickson, the Milton model is the mirror image of the Meta-model: it uses **artfully vague** language that lets the listener fill in meaning from their own experience.

Pattern	Example	Effect
Mind reading	'You may be wondering...'	Paces the listener's thoughts
Lost performative	'It's good to relax.'	Judgement without a source; hard to dispute
Cause-effect	'As you breathe, you relax more.'	Links a sure event to a desired one
Presupposition	'Will you start now or after the break?'	Assumes the change will happen
Embedded command	'You can **feel comfortable** now.'	Instruction marked by tone
Double bind	'Do you want to begin with A or B?'	Both options lead to action
Tag question	'You can do that, can't you?'	Softens resistance
Conversational postulate	'Can you imagine success?'	Yes/no question that invites action
Unspecified referential index	'People can learn easily.'	Listener applies it to self
Metaphor / story	'A client of mine once...'	Bypasses direct resistance

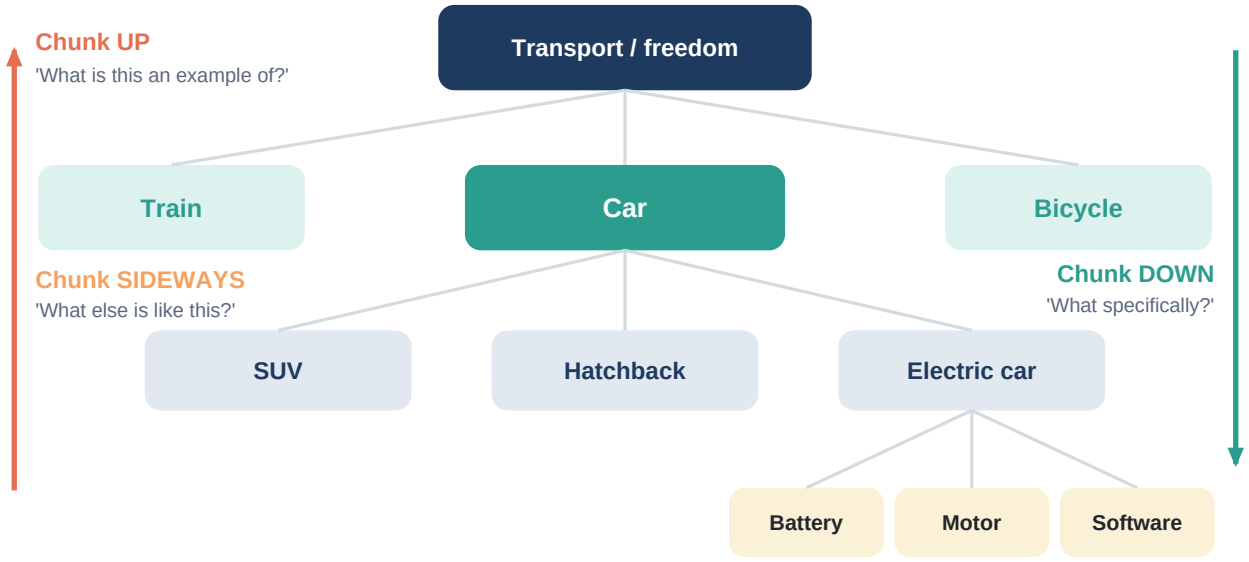
Meta-model
chunks **down** ↓
specific • precise • conscious

Milton model
chunks **up** ↑
vague • permissive • unconscious

PART 4 · LANGUAGE MODELS

Chunking

Chunking is the ability to move between levels of abstraction. It is used in negotiation, problem-solving and creativity.



Direction	Question	Use it to...
Chunk up	'What's important about that?' 'What is this an example of?'	Find shared values, agreement, purpose
Chunk down	'What specifically?' 'What's an example?'	Get detail, plans, next steps
Chunk sideways	'What else is like this?'	Generate alternatives, metaphors

Negotiation tip
Negotiators chunk up until both sides agree (e.g. 'we both want a reliable supply'), then chunk down to work out details from that shared ground.

Key takeaway
When a conversation stalls on details, chunk up to purpose. When it floats in abstractions, chunk down to the next concrete step.

PART 4 · LANGUAGE MODELS

Meta-Programs

Meta-programs are habitual 'sorting' patterns that shape what people pay attention to. Unlike personality types, they are said to vary by context. The LAB Profile (Shelle Rose Charvet) is a well-known applied version.

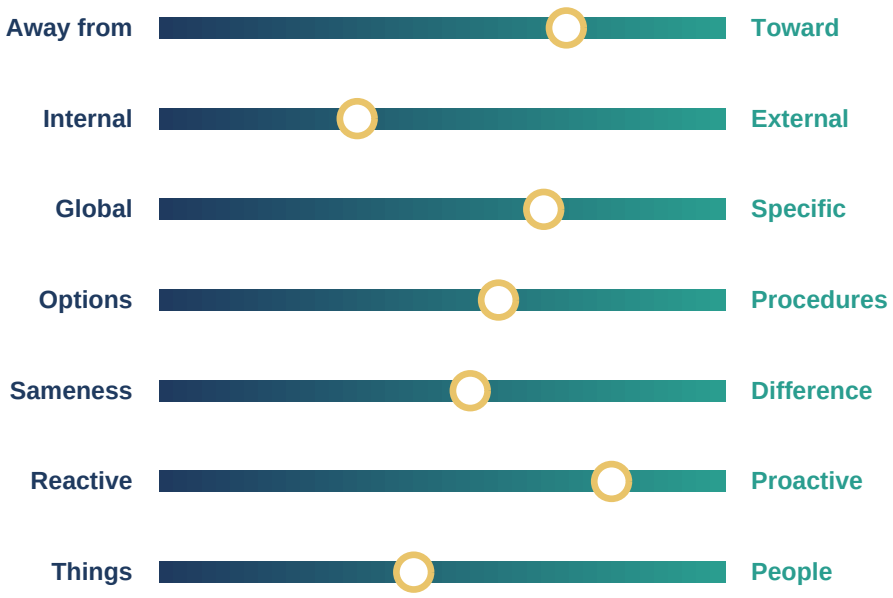
Meta-program	One end	Other end	Listen for
Direction	Toward goals	Away from problems	'achieve, gain' vs 'avoid, fix'
Reference	Internal	External	'I just know' vs 'others told me'
Chunk size	Global / big picture	Specific / detail	Overviews vs step-by-step lists
Options vs procedures	Options	Procedures	'alternatives' vs 'the right way'
Matching	Sameness	Difference	'like before' vs 'new, different'
Action	Proactive	Reactive	'just do it' vs 'wait, consider'
Convincer	Seeing / hearing / doing	Number of times / time	'show me' vs 'after 3 months'
Primary interest	People	Things / activities	Names and feelings vs tasks and tools

Practical use
Motivate a 'toward' person with what they'll gain; motivate an 'away from' person with what they'll avoid. Same offer - different framing.

PART 4 · LANGUAGE MODELS

Meta-Program Profile Example

Meta-programs are often visualised as sliders. Below is an example profile of a hypothetical project manager in a work context.



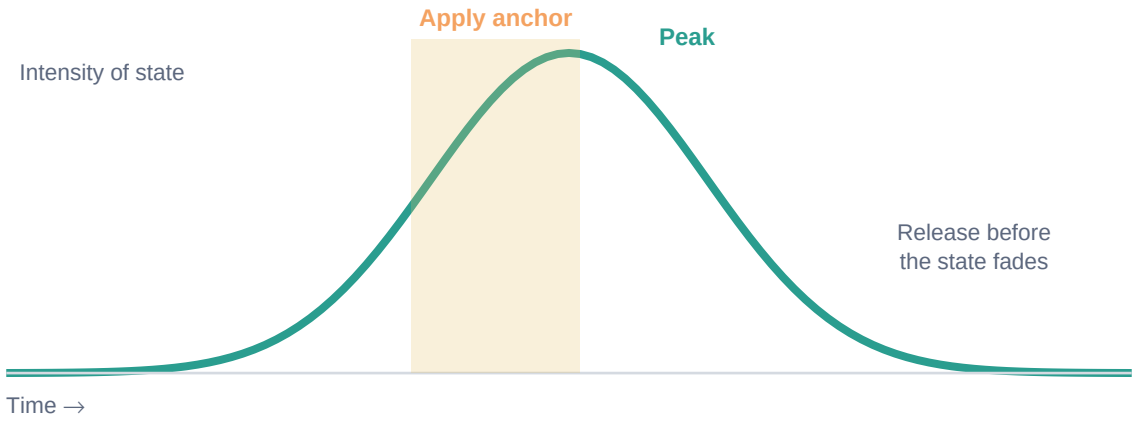
Context	How to communicate with this profile
Goal setting	Lead with targets and benefits (toward), then give a clear task list (specific)
Feedback	Offer data and invite their own judgement (mildly internal)
Change	Explain what stays the same and what's improved (sameness with exception)
Recruiting	Advert words: 'drive', 'deliver', 'structured process', 'take the initiative'

Meta-programs overlap with ideas in personality psychology (e.g. approach/avoidance motivation, locus of control), which do have research support - though NLP's specific categories are less well tested.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Anchoring

An **anchor** is a stimulus that triggers a consistent response - like a song that instantly takes you back to summer. NLP adapts the idea of classical conditioning to create anchors deliberately for useful states.



Key	Meaning
1. Intensity	The state must be strong and fully associated.
2. Timing	Fire the anchor just before the state peaks; release before it fades.
3. Uniqueness	Use a stimulus not used in daily life (e.g. squeezing a specific knuckle).
4. Replicability	The anchor must be repeatable in exactly the same way.
5. Number of times	Stacking the anchor several times strengthens it.

> **Key takeaway**
> You already have hundreds of anchors - songs, smells, places. Anchoring simply makes the process deliberate: pair a unique cue with a strong, chosen state.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Types of Anchors & Collapsing

Kinesthetic
Touch: pressing thumb and finger, touching a knuckle.

Auditory
A word, phrase or tone: 'calm', a particular song.

Visual
A gesture, an image, a picture on the desk.

Spatial
A place on stage or in a room linked to a state.

Olfactory
A scent - perfume, coffee, a candle.

Stacked
Several resource states anchored to one trigger.

Collapsing anchors

Two anchors - one for an unwanted state and one for a stronger resource state - are fired simultaneously. The theory is that the nervous system cannot run both fully, so the result is a new, more neutral or resourceful response.



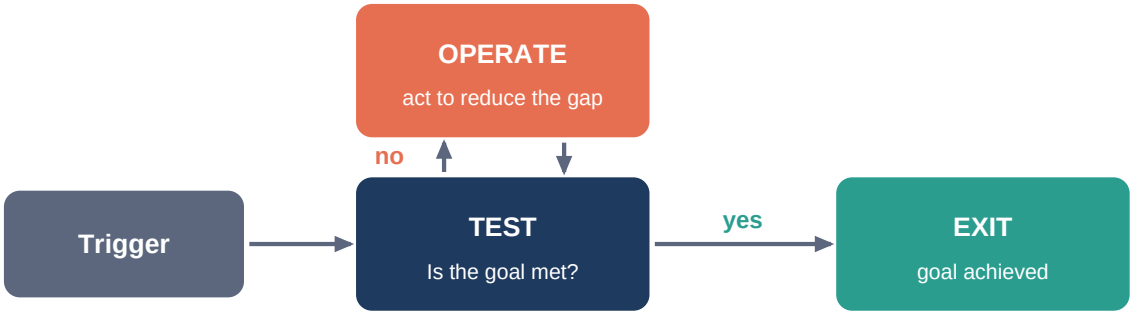
Evidence check
Anchoring overlaps with conditioning and cue-reactivity, which are well documented. The specific NLP procedures, however, have very limited controlled testing.

Key takeaway
Choose anchors that are discreet and easy to repeat in real situations - a fingertip press is more usable in a meeting than a spoken phrase.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Strategies & the TOTE Model

A **strategy** in NLP is the sequence of internal and external steps someone runs to get a result - how they decide, motivate themselves, spell, or fall in love. NLP builds on the TOTE model from cognitive psychology.



Test → Operate → Test → Exit (Miller, Galanter & Pribram, 1960)

NLP 'strategies' describe each step as a sequence of V, A, K, Ad representations.

Strategy	Example sequence	Notation
Decision (buying a car)	See it → imagine driving → check feeling → tell self 'yes'	Ve → Vc → K → Ad
Motivation (gym)	Picture fit body → feel good → say 'let's go'	Vc → K → Ad
Procrastination	See task → imagine it as huge → feel heavy → delay	Ve → Vc → K- → exit
Good speller	Hear word → see it in memory → feel 'right'	Ae → Vr → K

e = external, r = remembered, c = constructed, K- = negative feeling.

> **Key takeaway**
> To change a habit, first map its sequence. Interrupting or adding a single step - often the internal picture or self-talk - can change the outcome.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Reframing

Reframing changes the meaning of an experience by putting it in a different frame. 'Every experience can be useful in some context' is the presupposition behind it.

Content (meaning) reframe

Same situation, different meaning: *'What else could this mean?'*

Statement	Reframe
'My boss is always checking my work.'	'She cares about getting it right - and it's a chance to learn her standards.'
'I failed the exam.'	'Now you know exactly which topics to revise.'

Context reframe

Same behaviour, different setting: *'Where would this be useful?'*

Statement	Reframe
'My child is so stubborn.'	'That persistence will help her stand up to peer pressure.'
'I'm too picky.'	'Perfect for quality control or editing.'

Connection to research
Reframing has close cousins in mainstream psychology: **cognitive reappraisal** in emotion-regulation research and **cognitive restructuring** in CBT, both of which have a strong evidence base.

Positive intention
'What is this behaviour trying to achieve for you?'

Outcome reframe
'What do you want instead?'

Time reframe
'In 5 years, how will you see this?'

Key takeaway
Ask 'What else could this mean?' and 'Where would this be useful?' Two questions, practised daily, build a more flexible way of seeing events.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

The Six-Step Reframe

A classic NLP process for changing an unwanted behaviour while respecting the positive intention behind it.



Example: a 'part' that makes someone snack late at night may have the positive intention of comfort after a stressful day. New choices: a warm bath, calling a friend, a 10-minute walk.

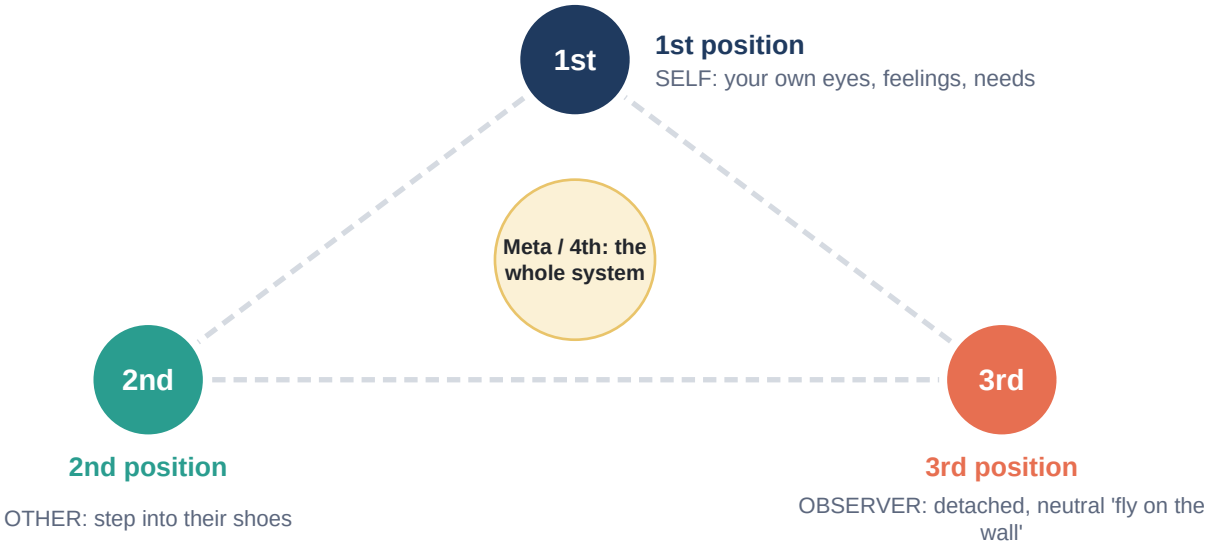
Key takeaway

The core idea - honour the need behind a behaviour and find better ways to meet it - is useful even if you never use the formal six steps.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Perceptual Positions

Perceptual positions help you see a situation from multiple viewpoints - useful for conflict, negotiation, empathy and preparing difficult conversations.



Position	Language	Benefit	Risk if overused
1st - Self	'I think, I feel, I want'	Clarity about own needs	Selfishness, blind spots
2nd - Other	'You/I (as them) feel...'	Empathy, understanding	Losing your own position
3rd - Observer	'He/she, they...'	Objectivity, perspective	Coldness, detachment
4th - System	'We, the team...'	Sees whole-system effects	Too abstract

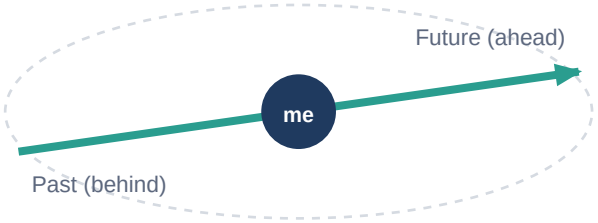
Related exercise - **meta-mirror** (Dilts): physically move between chairs or floor spots to occupy each position.

> **Key takeaway**
> Before a difficult conversation, spend two minutes in each position. Most people discover something new in second position.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

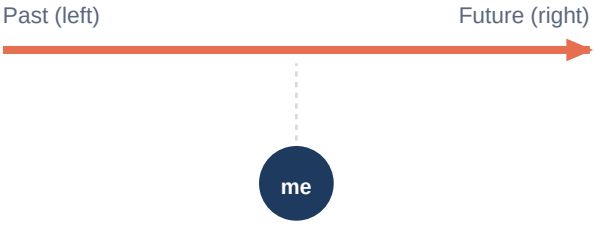
Timelines

NLP observes that people mentally arrange time along a spatial line. How that line is organised is said to influence how they relate to past, present and future.



IN TIME

Lives in the 'now'; flexible with deadlines; immersed in experience



THROUGH TIME

Sees time laid out in front; punctual, plans ahead, more dissociated

Timeline techniques

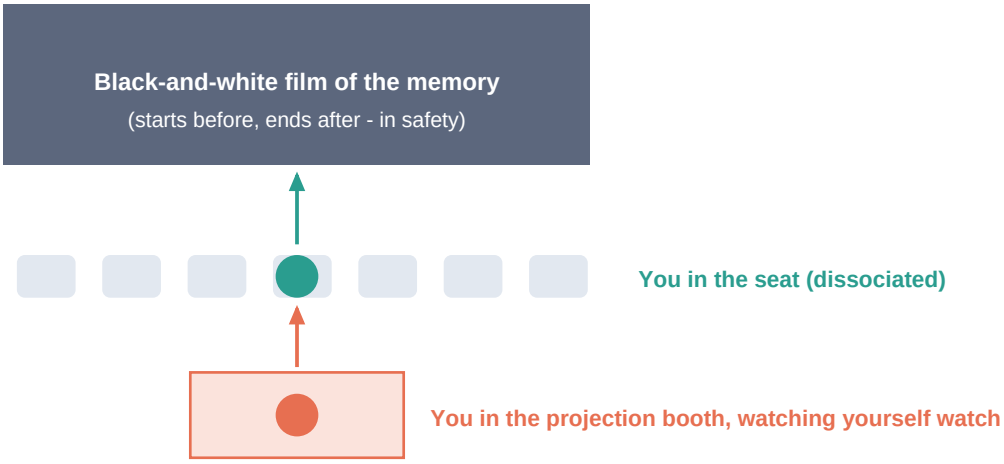
Technique	Process (in brief)
Finding your timeline	'Point to where your past is... your future.' Notice direction and distance.
Releasing negative emotion	Float above the line to before an event; notice the emotion is gone at that point.
Placing goals	Imagine the achieved goal and place it in your future; notice events re-aligning.
Future pacing	Mentally rehearse using a new resource in a specific future situation.

Time Line Therapy® is a trademarked approach developed by Tad James in the 1980s. Spatial thinking about time is a real cognitive phenomenon studied in psychology, but therapeutic claims remain largely untested.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Fast Phobia Cure (V/K Dissociation)

Perhaps NLP's best-known therapeutic technique. It aims to reduce the emotional charge of a phobia or traumatic memory using **double dissociation**: watching yourself watching the memory.



1. **Imagine sitting in a cinema**
   a still black & white picture on screen, before the event
2. **Float into the projection booth**
   see yourself in the seat, watching the screen
3. **Run the film**
   from just before to just after the event, in black & white
4. **Freeze at the safe end**
   then step into the scene in colour
5. **Rewind fast**
   run the whole thing backwards in 1-2 seconds, with circus music
6. **Repeat and test**
   repeat several times; then think of the trigger

A related protocol, 'Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memories' (RTM), is being studied in small trials with veterans. Anyone with trauma or severe phobia should work with a qualified clinician.

Key takeaway

Distance and dissociation are the active ingredients: viewing a memory from 'outside' typically reduces its emotional intensity. Severe phobias and trauma need professional support.

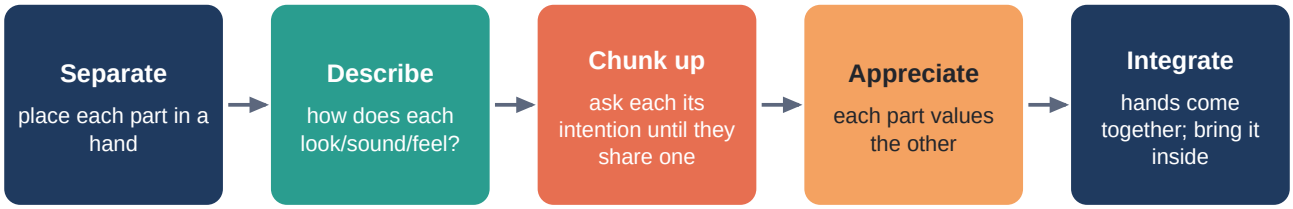
PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Parts Integration

When someone says 'part of me wants X, but part of me wants Y', NLP treats the two sides as 'parts' with positive intentions. The **visual squash** brings them together.



Hands come together as the parts integrate around a common positive intention



Context

Parts work is also central to Gestalt therapy and Internal Family Systems (IFS). The idea that inner conflict involves competing goals is widely accepted; the specific technique is untested.

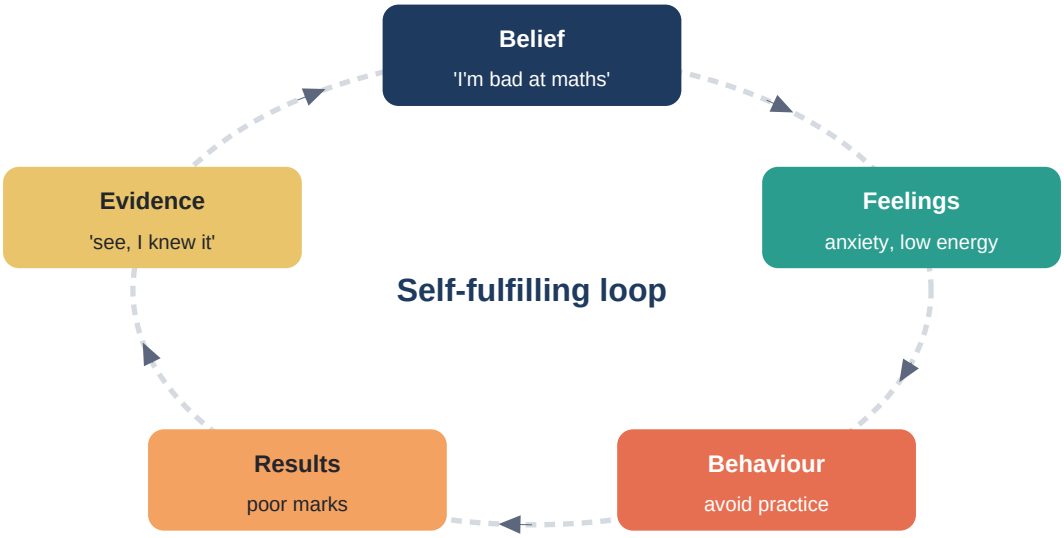
Key takeaway

Inner conflict usually means two valid needs are competing. Name both, look for the bigger goal they share, and design a choice that respects each.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Beliefs & Belief Change

NLP treats beliefs as generalisations that act like self-fulfilling prophecies. Change the belief and the loop can run in a more helpful direction.



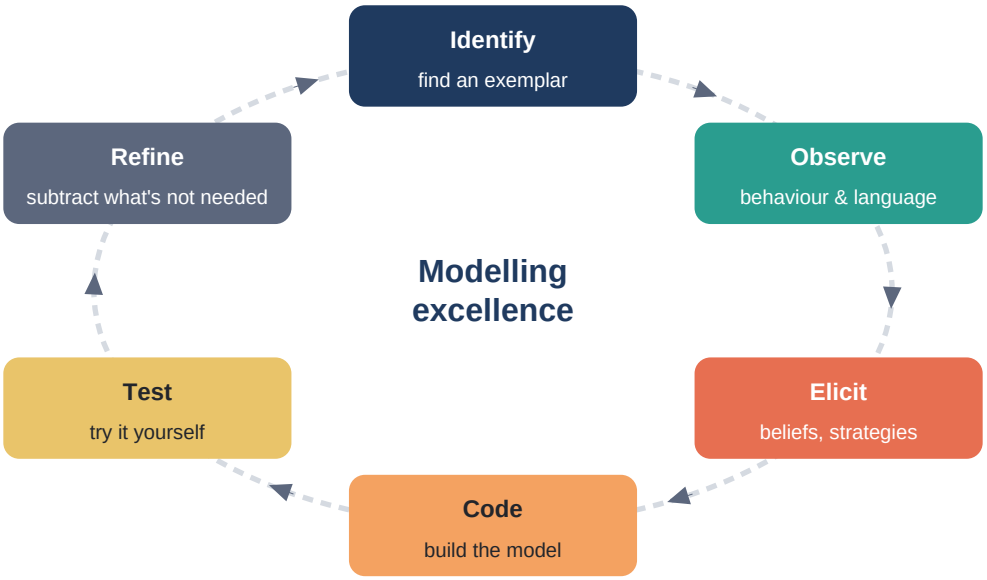
Method	How it works
Belief change cycle (Dilts)	Move a belief from 'currently believe' through 'doubt' to 'museum of old beliefs', and a new one in via 'open to believe'.
Submodality shift	Map the old belief into the submodalities of doubt; map the new one into certainty.
Sleight of mouth	14 verbal patterns that challenge a belief by redefining, counter-example, consequence, etc.
Counter-examples	'Has there ever been a time when that wasn't true?'

Key takeaway
Treat a limiting belief as a hypothesis, not a fact. Look for counter-examples, run small experiments, and let new evidence update the belief.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

Modelling Excellence

Modelling is said to be the heart of NLP: studying someone who achieves exceptional results, extracting how they do it - including beliefs and strategies they may not be aware of - and teaching it to others.



Approach	Description
Analytical modelling	Interview and observe the expert; elicit their strategies and beliefs explicitly.
Implicit modelling (New Code)	'Second-position' the expert unconsciously until you get similar results, then code it.
Subtraction	Remove elements one at a time; keep only what makes a difference.

Modelling has parallels with cognitive task analysis and expertise research (e.g. studying expert decision-making), which use more systematic and verifiable methods.

> **Key takeaway**
> You can model anyone you admire: ask what they pay attention to, what they believe about the task, and what they do step by step - then practise it deliberately.

PART 5 · CORE TECHNIQUES

State Management

A **state** is your overall mind-body condition at a given moment. NLP emphasises that you can learn to choose your state rather than being driven by it.



1. Recall a time you were at your best
2. Associate fully: see, hear and feel it
3. At the peak, step into the circle
4. Step out, break state; repeat 3-5 times
5. Future pace: step in just before a challenge

Lever	Quick technique
Physiology	Stand tall, breathe slowly from the belly, relax the shoulders
Focus	Shift attention: 'What's going well? What can I control?'
Language	Change self-talk: from 'I have to' to 'I choose to'
Submodalities	Shrink the worry image; brighten the goal image
Anchors	Fire a pre-set resource anchor before a stressful event

Breathing and attention-based self-regulation techniques are supported by broader research; NLP packages them with its own vocabulary.

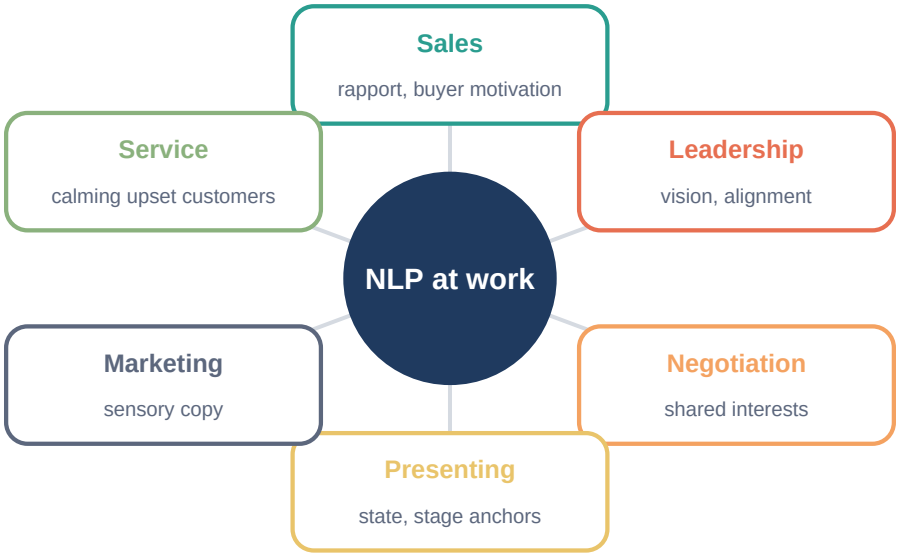
> **Key takeaway**
> Physiology is the fastest lever: change posture and breathing first, then work on thoughts and images.

PART 6 · APPLICATIONS

NLP in Business & Sales

Business is now the largest market for NLP training. Common uses include sales, leadership, negotiation and presenting.

Area	NLP tools used	Example application
Sales	Rapport, predicates, meta-programs, pacing	Match a 'toward' buyer with gains; an 'away from' buyer with risks avoided
Leadership	Logical levels, well-formed outcomes, reframing	Align team identity and purpose before changing behaviours
Negotiation	Chunking, perceptual positions	Chunk up to shared interests; rehearse from the other side's position
Presenting	Anchoring, state management, spatial anchors	Use one stage spot for stories, another for data
Marketing	Sensory language, Milton patterns	Copy that lets readers 'see, hear and feel' the benefit



Ethical reminder
Persuasion tools can be misused. Influence that hides intentions or exploits people's vulnerabilities is manipulation - see 'Ethics' later in this summary.

PART 6 · APPLICATIONS

NLP in Coaching & Therapy

NLP is popular among life coaches and some therapists, usually as a set of techniques blended with other approaches. In most countries it is **not** a regulated therapy, and 'NLP practitioner' is not a protected title.

Issue	Typical NLP approach	Evidence-based first-line approach
Phobias	Fast phobia cure	Exposure therapy / CBT
Anxiety	Anchoring, submodalities, reframing	CBT, applied relaxation, medication if needed
Low confidence	Circle of excellence, belief change	CBT, behavioural activation, skills practice
Habits (e.g. nail biting)	Swish pattern	Habit-reversal training
Trauma / PTSD	V/K dissociation, RTM	Trauma-focused CBT, EMDR, prolonged exposure
Goal setting	Well-formed outcomes	Goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham)

Possible strengths

Brief, practical, goal-focused; positive language; emphasis on client resources.

Limitations

Weak evidence; variable training quality; risk of over-promising 'one-session cures'.

Safe use

As a coaching add-on - not a substitute for mental-health care for clinical conditions.

Key takeaway

If a problem is affecting sleep, work, relationships or safety, start with a qualified health professional; coaching tools can complement, not replace, that care.

PART 6 · APPLICATIONS

NLP in Education & Everyday Life

NLP ideas have spread into classrooms, parenting and personal communication - sometimes helpfully, sometimes as myths.

Useful takeaways

- Phrase instructions positively: 'walk' rather than 'don't run'.
- Ask 'what specifically?' to understand a struggling learner.
- Reframe mistakes as feedback to support a growth mindset.
- Calibrate students' non-verbal signals of confusion.
- Set well-formed learning goals with clear evidence.

Myths to avoid

- 'Visual, auditory, kinesthetic learners' - teaching to a preferred style does not improve learning.
- Eye movements reveal lying or learning style.
- Fixed 'personality' labels from meta-programs.
- One technique can cure dyslexia or ADHD.

Swap the myths for evidence-based learning strategies

Retrieval practice
Self-testing beats re-reading for long-term memory.

Spaced practice
Spread study sessions over time rather than cramming.

Dual coding
Combine words and visuals - for everyone, not just 'visual learners'.

Worked examples
Show step-by-step solutions before independent practice.

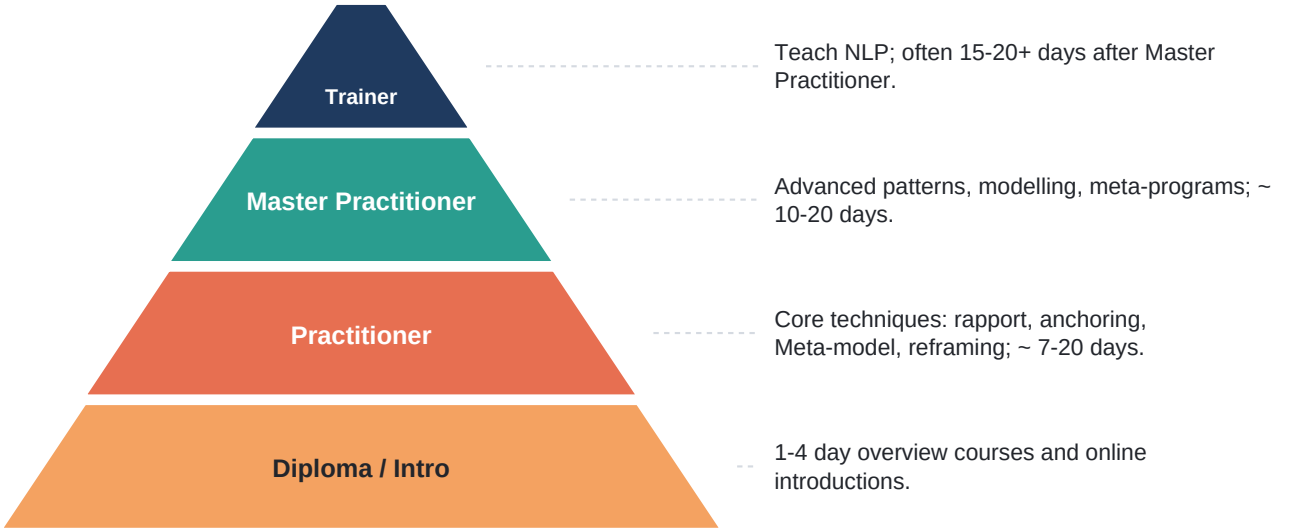
Teacher surveys in several countries have found very high belief in matching teaching to 'learning styles', while systematic reviews find little or no support for it.

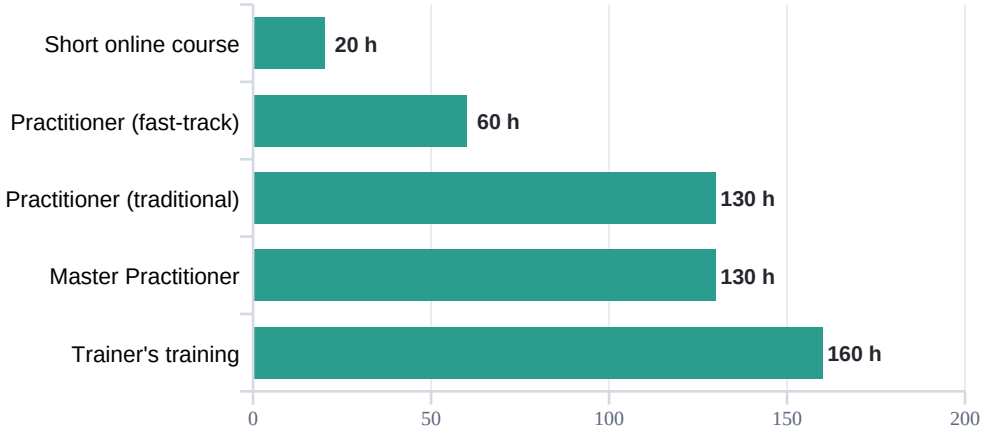
Key takeaway
Keep the communication habits (positive phrasing, curious questions, feedback mindset) and drop the labels (learning styles, eye-reading).

PART 6 · APPLICATIONS

Training & Certification

NLP training is offered by many independent bodies (e.g. Society of NLP, ANLP, INLPTA, ABNLP). There is no single regulator, so course length and quality vary widely.





Approximate classroom hours - ranges vary considerably by provider.

Choosing a course

Check: who accredits the course, how many live practice hours it includes, and whether the trainer is honest about the evidence base.

PART 7 · EVIDENCE & EVALUATION

What Does the Research Say?

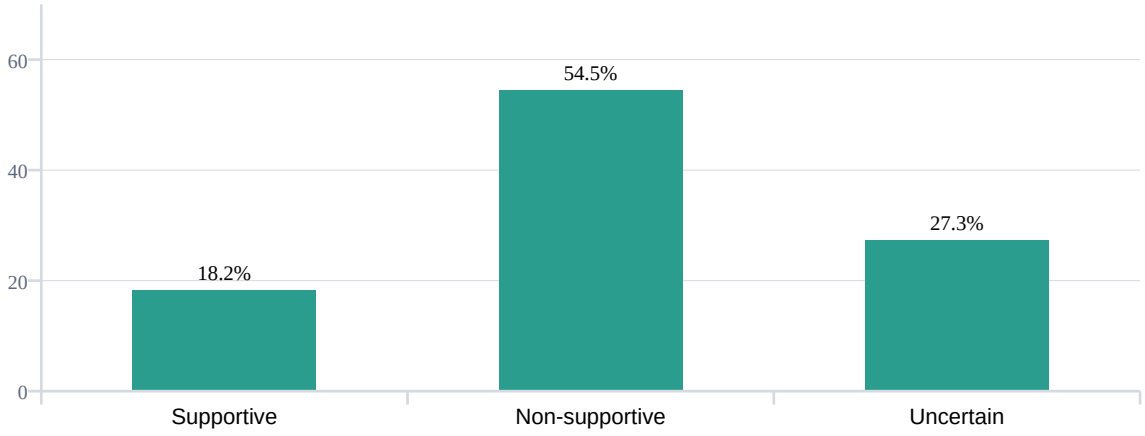
Since the 1980s, researchers have tested NLP's specific claims. The overall verdict in mainstream psychology is that NLP's core theoretical claims are **not supported**.

33
studies analysed in Witkowski's 2010 review

18%
found results supportive of NLP

55%
found results not supportive

27%
were uncertain



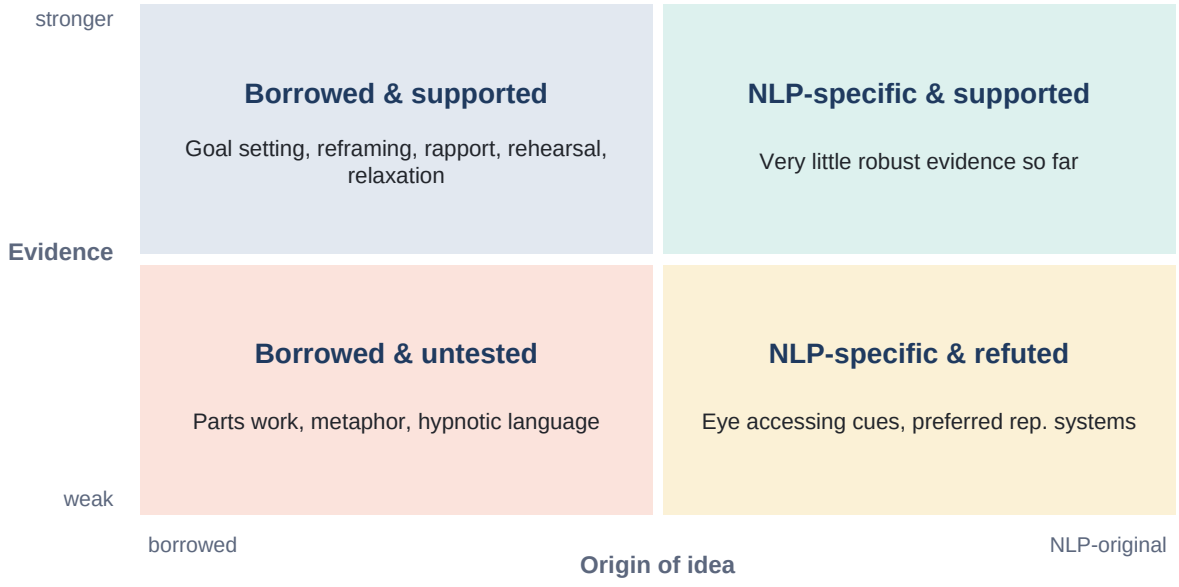
Source: Witkowski, T. (2010). *Thirty-five years of research on Neuro-Linguistic Programming*. Polish Psychological Bulletin.

Review	Finding
Sharpley (1984, 1987)	Little support for preferred representational systems or predicate matching.
Heap (1988)	Concluded core claims had not been shown to be valid.
Witkowski (2010)	Majority of empirical studies did not support NLP's tenets.
Sturt et al. (2012)	Systematic review: insufficient evidence that NLP improves health outcomes.
Wiseman et al. (2012)	Eye movements did not distinguish truth from lies.

PART 7 · EVIDENCE & EVALUATION

Common Criticisms

Criticism	Explanation
Lack of empirical support	Key claims (rep systems, eye cues) have failed controlled tests.
Pseudoscientific framing	Uses 'neuro' terminology without grounding in neuroscience.
Unfalsifiable	Failures are explained away ('wasn't calibrated properly'), making claims hard to test.
Commercialisation	Profit-driven trainings, big promises, few quality controls.
Borrowed ideas	Effective elements (rapport, reframing, goal setting) pre-date NLP.
Manipulation risk	Persuasion techniques marketed for sales, seduction or control.
Weak research culture	Little peer-reviewed research from within the NLP community.



Key takeaway
Evaluate each NLP idea on its own evidence. Some components are well supported under other names; others have been tested and failed.

PART 7 · EVIDENCE & EVALUATION

Why Do People Still Find It Useful?

Despite weak evidence for its theory, many people report finding NLP training valuable. Several explanations are possible.

Common factors
Rapport, expectation and a supportive helper drive change across all therapies.

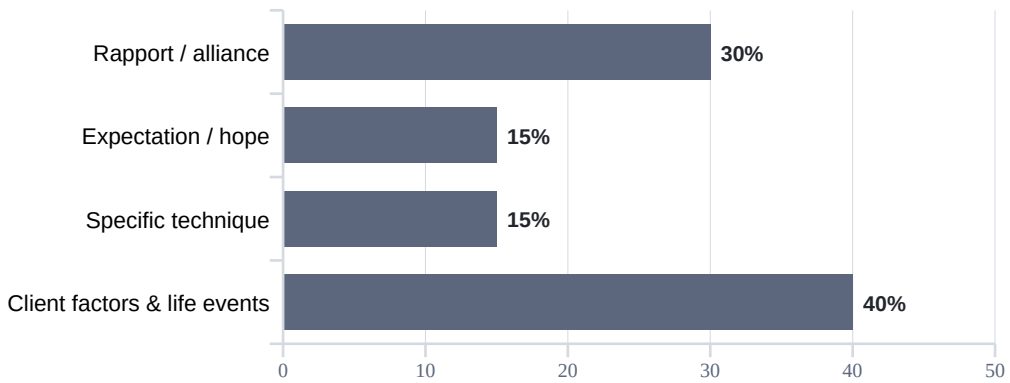
Borrowed good ideas
Reframing, goal setting and mental rehearsal do work - with or without the NLP label.

Placebo & expectancy
Strong belief in a method can improve how people feel and act.

Practice & attention
Courses involve lots of listening and communication practice.

Self-selection
Motivated people attend courses and would likely improve anyway.

Confirmation bias
Successes are remembered; failures are blamed on technique.



Illustrative breakdown of contributions to therapy outcome, based on a widely cited estimate by Lambert (1992). Later research refines these numbers but supports the importance of common factors.

Key takeaway

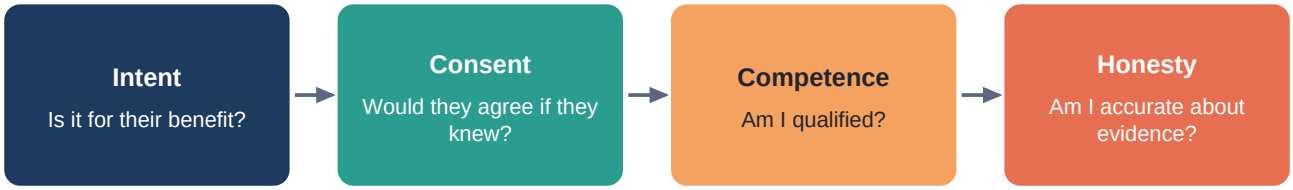
A technique can feel helpful for reasons unrelated to its theory. That's why controlled studies matter: they separate what works from why people think it works.

PART 7 · EVIDENCE & EVALUATION

Ethics in NLP

Any set of influence techniques raises ethical questions. Responsible practitioners apply the NLP idea of **ecology** to others as well as themselves.

Ethical use	Unethical use
Transparent about goals and methods	Hidden agendas, covert 'programming'
Client's outcome comes first	Practitioner's profit or ego comes first
Honest about evidence and limits	Claims of guaranteed or one-session cures
Refers clinical issues to qualified professionals	Treats serious mental illness outside competence
Rapport to understand	Rapport to exploit (e.g. high-pressure sales, 'seduction' tactics)
Respects 'no'	Uses double binds to override consent



Red flags when choosing an NLP practitioner or course

Miracle promises
'Cure any phobia in 5 minutes', 'guaranteed' results.

Clinical claims
Offers to treat depression, PTSD or addiction without clinical qualifications.

Secret persuasion
Sells 'covert hypnosis' or techniques to control others.

Pressure upsells
Expensive 'next level' courses pushed during the training.

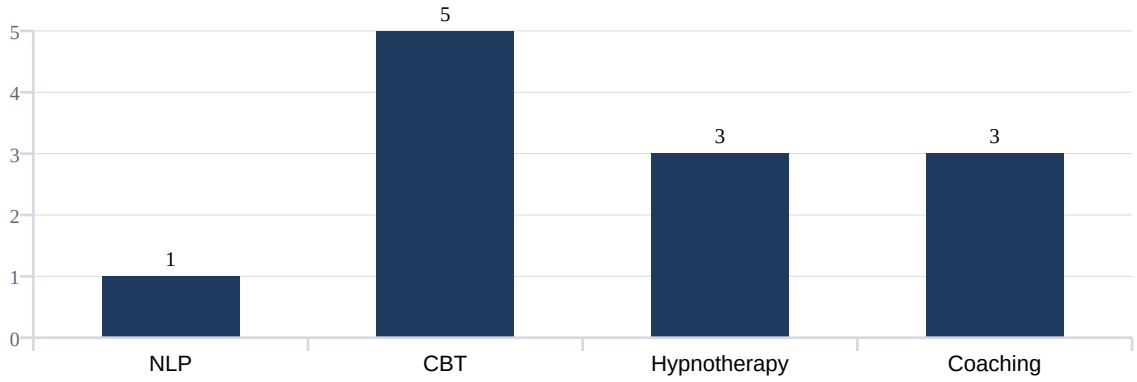
No evidence talk
Dismisses all research as 'not understanding NLP'.

Celebrity hype
Credentials based on famous clients, not supervision or ethics codes.

PART 7 · EVIDENCE & EVALUATION

NLP Compared with Other Approaches

Feature	NLP	CBT	Hypnotherapy	Coaching (general)
Origin	1970s, modelling therapists	1960s, Beck & Ellis	18th-19th c.; Erickson	1980s-90s
Focus	Subjective experience & language	Thoughts, feelings, behaviour	Trance & suggestion	Goals & performance
Evidence base	Weak	Strong	Moderate (some uses)	Moderate, growing
Regulation	Unregulated	Regulated (clinical)	Mostly unregulated	Mostly unregulated
Typical length	1-5 sessions	6-20 sessions	1-10 sessions	Ongoing
Key tools	Anchoring, reframing, Meta-model	Thought records, exposure	Induction, imagery	GROW, questioning



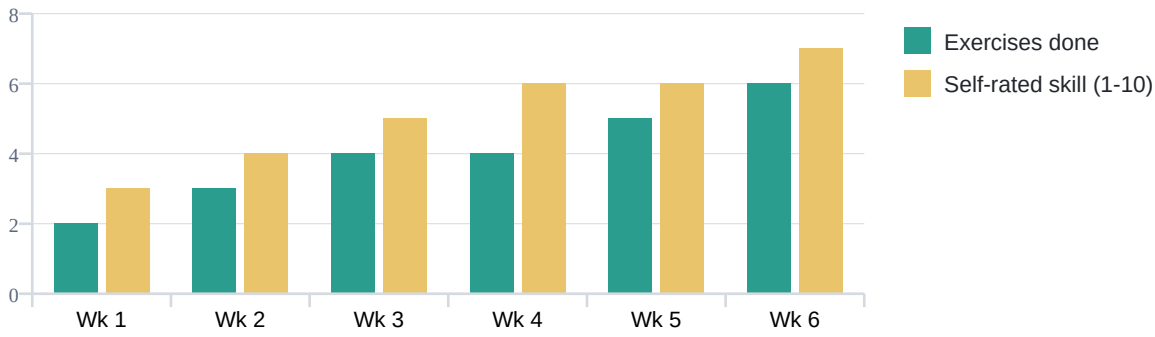
Relative strength of research evidence on a 1-5 scale (author's summary of systematic-review findings; illustrative, not a formal grading).

PART 8 · PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Practice Exercises

Short exercises drawn from NLP that are low-risk and useful as communication skills - whatever their theoretical status.

Exercise	Time	Steps
Predicate spotting	10 min	Listen to a podcast; note visual, auditory, kinesthetic words used.
Backtracking	5 min	In your next conversation, repeat key words back exactly before replying.
Well-formed goal	15 min	Write one goal; check it against all eight conditions.
Perceptual positions	15 min	Replay a conflict from 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions; note insights.
Reframe journal	5 min/day	Write one frustrating event and two alternative meanings.
Meta-model listening	10 min	Notice 'always/never', 'must/can't' in your own self-talk.
Resource anchor	10 min	Recall a confident time, intensify it, anchor with a unique touch; test.
Future pacing	5 min	Mentally rehearse handling a difficult situation well.



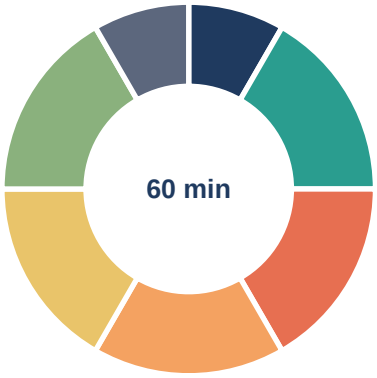
Example 6-week practice tracker.

PART 8 · PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Sample Coaching Session Flow

How the tools might combine in a single 60-minute, NLP-informed coaching session (non-clinical).

1. **Build rapport (5 min)**
   match pace and predicates; backtrack key words
2. **Clarify the outcome (10 min)**
   well-formed outcome questions; ecology check
3. **Explore the present state (10 min)**
   Meta-model questions; notice limiting beliefs
4. **Shift perspective (10 min)**
   reframing; perceptual positions
5. **Build resources (10 min)**
   anchor a resource state; circle of excellence
6. **Future pace (10 min)**
   rehearse the target situation with the new resource
7. **Commit to actions (5 min)**
   first step; how will you know it worked?



Rapport	5
Outcome	10
Exploration	10
Perspective	10
Resources	10
Future pace	10
Actions	5

PART 8 · PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Glossary (A-L)

Term	Definition
Anchor	A stimulus that triggers a specific state or response.
Associated	Experiencing a memory through your own eyes, feeling it fully.
Auditory digital (Ad)	Internal dialogue; self-talk and logical processing.
Backtracking	Repeating someone's key words back to them.
Calibration	Learning what a person's non-verbal signals mean for them.
Chunking	Moving between levels of detail and abstraction.
Collapsing anchors	Firing two opposing anchors together to neutralise one.
Congruence	When words, voice and body all send the same message.
Deep structure	The full linguistic representation behind a spoken sentence.
Dissociated	Seeing yourself in a memory from the outside.
Ecology	Checking a change fits with the whole person and their system.
Eye accessing cues	Eye movements claimed (unreliably) to indicate thinking mode.
Future pacing	Mentally rehearsing a new behaviour in a future context.
Leading	Changing your behaviour to guide another once rapport exists.
Logical levels	Dilts' model: environment to purpose.

Glossary (M-Z)

Term	Definition
Meta-model	Questions that recover deleted, distorted or generalised information.
Meta-program	A habitual filter for what a person pays attention to.
Milton model	Artfully vague, hypnotic language patterns from Milton Erickson.
Mirroring	Reflecting another's body language as in a mirror.
Modelling	Studying and replicating the patterns of excellent performers.
Nominalisation	A process turned into a noun ('decision', 'relationship').
Pacing	Matching another's experience or behaviour to build rapport.
Predicates	Sensory-based words indicating a representational system.
Presuppositions	NLP's working assumptions, held 'as if' true.
Rapport	Mutual trust and responsiveness between people.
Reframing	Changing the meaning or context of an experience.
Representational system	Sensory channel used to code experience (VAKOG).
State	Overall mind-body condition at a given moment.
Submodalities	Fine qualities of a representation (size, brightness, volume).
Swish pattern	Visual technique to replace a cue image with a desired self-image.
TOTE	Test-Operate-Test-Exit: basic unit of a strategy.

PART 8 · PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Quick-Reference Cheat Sheet

If you want to...	Try this NLP tool	Key question or step
Build trust quickly	Matching & backtracking	Match pace; repeat their key words
Clarify vague statements	Meta-model	'What, specifically?'
Set a motivating goal	Well-formed outcome	'What will you see, hear, feel?'
Shift a bad mood	State management	Change posture and breathing first
Feel confident on demand	Resource anchor	Recall, intensify, anchor at peak
Reduce a memory's charge	Submodalities	Smaller, dimmer, further, black & white
Break a habit	Swish pattern	Cue image → desired self-image, fast x5
Resolve a conflict	Perceptual positions	See it as self, other, observer
See the upside	Reframing	'What else could this mean?'
Find agreement	Chunking up	'What's important about that?'
Plan the detail	Chunking down	'What's the first step?'
Align a team	Logical levels	Start with identity & purpose

12
presuppositions

6
representational systems

12+
Meta-model patterns

5
keys to anchoring

CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

1. A map of the mind

NLP models how we filter reality into personal 'maps' and how language and senses shape them.

2. A toolkit

Rapport, Meta-model, anchoring, reframing and goal-setting are its most practical tools.

3. Built by modelling

It grew from copying Perls, Satir and Erickson - and inherits their strengths.

4. Weak science

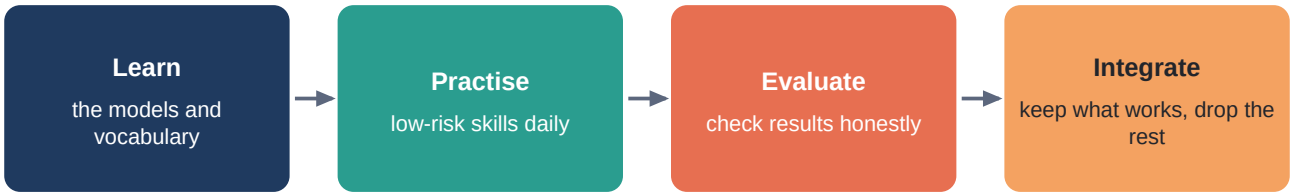
Core claims (rep systems, eye cues) fail tests; health benefits are unproven.

5. Useful overlaps

Its most useful parts overlap with CBT, coaching and communication research.

6. Use with care

Treat it as a communication toolkit, use it ethically, and refer clinical issues.



Final thought

Hold NLP's ideas the way its own presuppositions suggest: not as truth, but as maps - useful when they help you communicate better, and worth redrawing when the evidence says otherwise.