NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING · A VISUAL SUMMARY

Logical Levels

Robert Dilts' model of change

Environment · Behaviour · Capabilities · Beliefs & Values · Identity · Purpose — how the levels of experience fit together, and how to use them for learning, coaching, leadership and personal change.



Covers: origins in Bateson's work · the six levels · hierarchy and nesting · language cues · diagnosis · interventions · alignment process · coaching, leadership, education and health · critique · exercises

OVERVIEW

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SECTION 01

What Are Logical Levels?

Logical Levels — also called **Neuro-Logical Levels** — is a model developed by NLP trainer and author **Robert Dilts**. It describes six levels at which people think, learn, communicate and change, from the external *environment* up to a sense of *purpose* beyond the individual.

The model is a practical way to answer a common question in coaching and leadership: *at what level is this issue really happening?* A problem that looks like a skills gap may actually be a belief; a conflict about behaviour may really be about identity.



The core idea

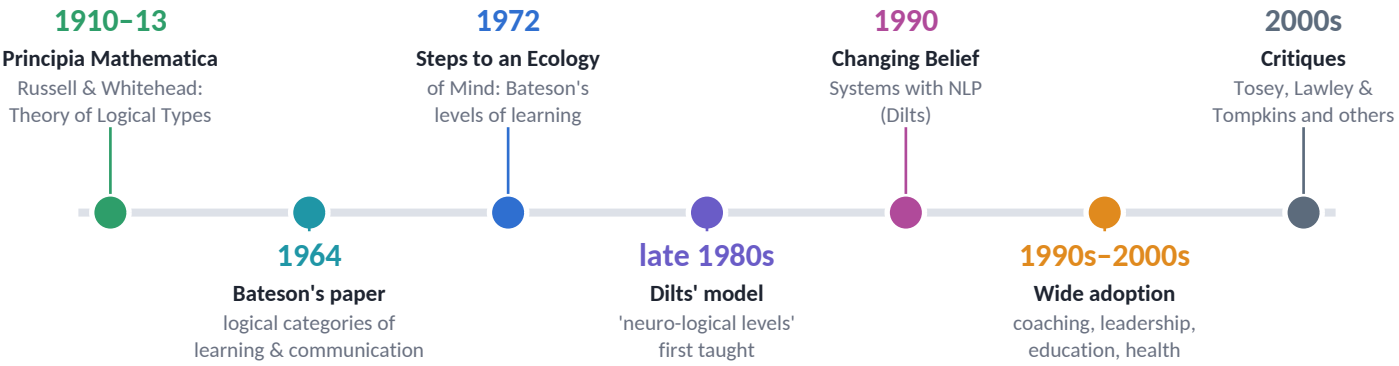
Each level organises the information on the level below it. Changes at higher levels tend to ripple downward and affect many lower-level behaviours, while lower-level changes may or may not affect higher levels.

SECTION 02

Origins: From Russell to Bateson to Dilts

Dilts built the model in the late 1980s, drawing on the anthropologist **Gregory Bateson**. Bateson in turn borrowed the idea of 'logical types' from Bertrand Russell's mathematics: a class is of a different logical type from its members — the *category* 'furniture' is not itself a chair.

Bateson applied this to learning and communication, arguing that some learning happens *about* other learning. Dilts translated these ideas into a practical, everyday framework that coaches and trainers could use.



Thinker	Key idea borrowed by the model
Bertrand Russell	Theory of Logical Types: a class differs in type from its members
Gregory Bateson	Logical categories of learning; levels of learning (0, I, II, III)
Robert Dilts	Six 'neuro-logical' levels applied to people, teams and organisations
Todd Epstein & colleagues	Co-developed NLP applications with Dilts at NLP University

> **Note**
>
> Dilts often presents the model as a **practical heuristic** — a useful map for organising experience — rather than a strict application of Russell's logic. This distinction matters for the critiques in Section 25.

SECTION 03

The Six Levels at a Glance

Each level is linked to a simple question. Asking the questions in sequence gives a quick, structured picture of a person, team or situation.

Level	Question	Describes	Sounds like ...
6 · Purpose	For whom? For what?	Vision, mission, contribution, connection to something larger	"I'm here to ..."
5 · Identity	Who?	Sense of self, roles, self-image	"I am a ..."
4 · Beliefs & Values	Why?	What is important and true; motivation and permission	"I believe ... / It matters that ..."
3 · Capabilities	How?	Skills, knowledge, strategies, mental maps	"I can / know how to ..."
2 · Behaviour	What?	Specific actions and reactions	"I do / I did ..."
1 · Environment	Where? When? With whom?	External context, opportunities and constraints	"There / then / they ..."

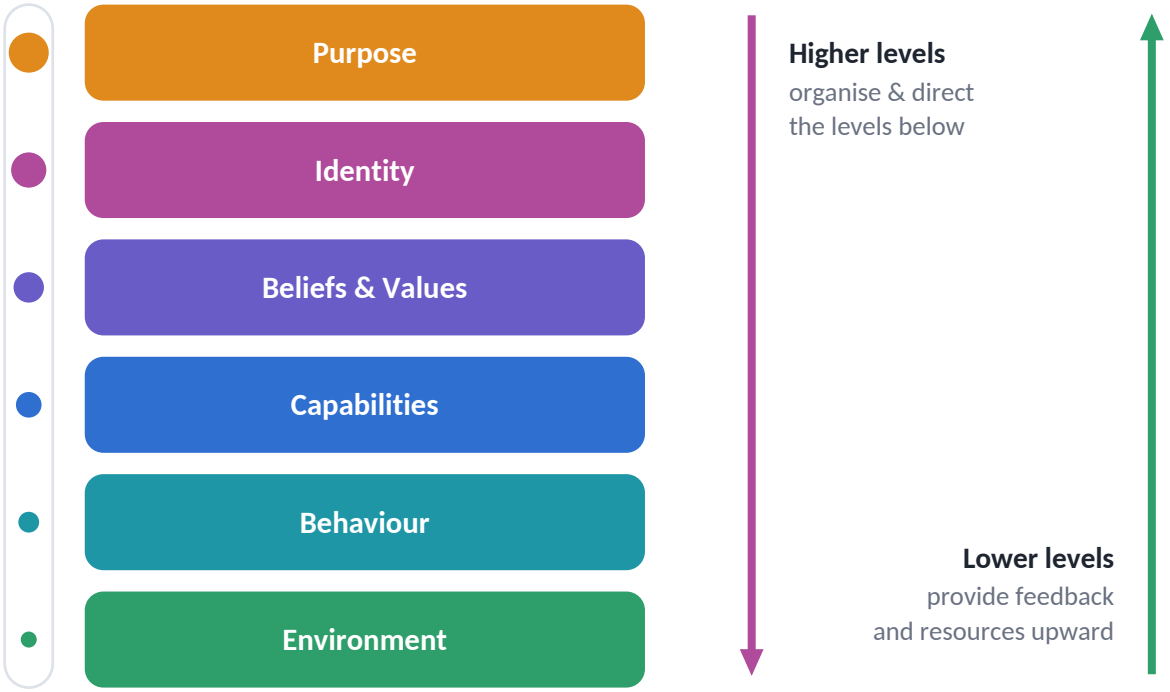
A quick example: a new manager

Level	What the new manager might say
Purpose	"I want to help this team do work that really matters to our customers."
Identity	"I'm becoming a leader, not just a good specialist."
Beliefs & Values	"People do their best work when they feel trusted."
Capabilities	"I'm learning to delegate and give clear feedback."
Behaviour	"I hold a 20-minute one-to-one with each person every week."
Environment	"A new office, a team of eight, and a deadline in March."

SECTION 04

How the Levels Relate

The levels are not just a list. Dilts describes them as a **hierarchy**: each level synthesises, organises and directs the activity of the level below it. In practice this gives three useful principles.



Principle	Meaning	Implication
Top-down influence	A change of belief or identity alters many behaviours at once	Higher-level work can create broad, lasting change
Bottom-up feedback	New experiences and actions can gradually reshape beliefs	Small actions and new environments still matter
Level confusion	Treating a higher-level issue as a lower-level one (or vice versa)	Training won't fix a values conflict; a slogan won't fix a skills gap

Rule of thumb

Dilts and others often cite Einstein's line that a problem can't be solved with the same thinking that created it. In Logical Levels terms: look for the solution at least **one level above** the level at which the problem is stated.

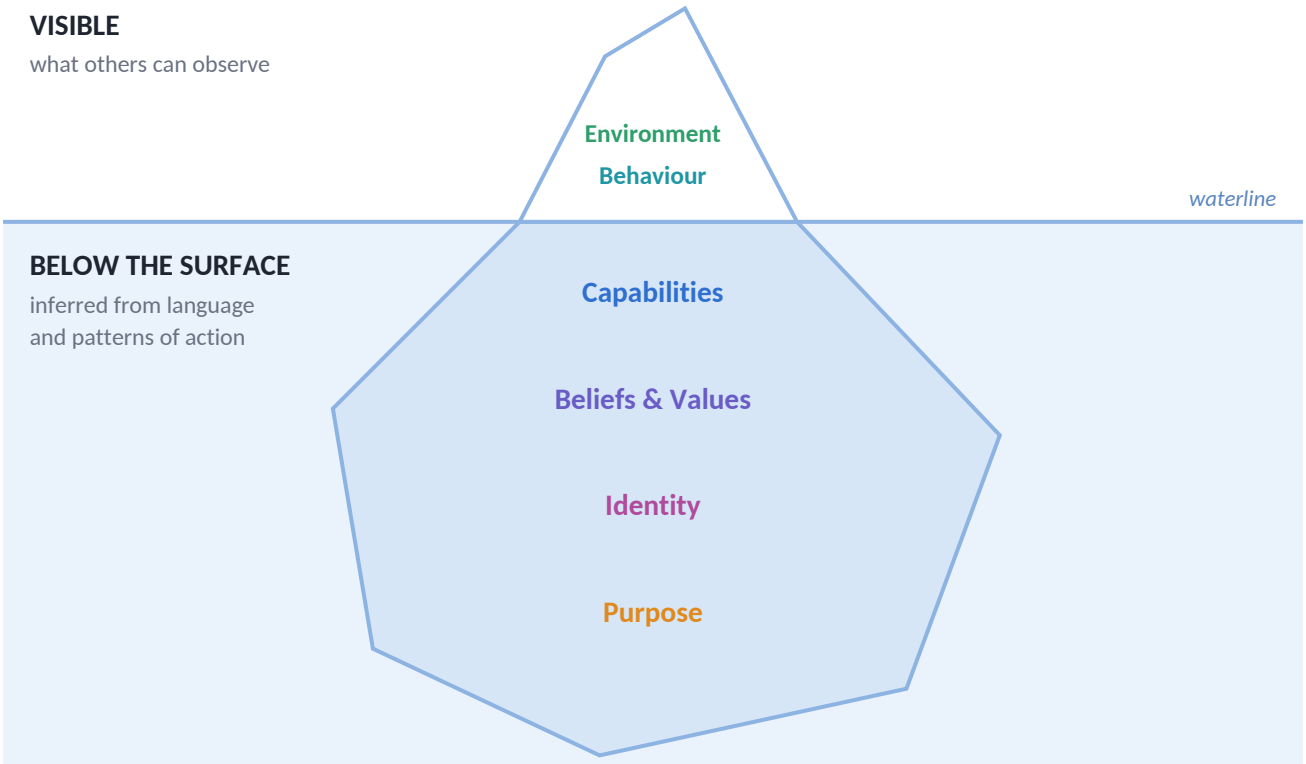
SECTION 05

Related Models & Visual Metaphors

Logical Levels sits in a family of layered models. Comparing it with them helps clarify what it is — and what it is not.

The iceberg view

Only the bottom two levels are directly observable. Everything else has to be inferred from language and patterns of behaviour.

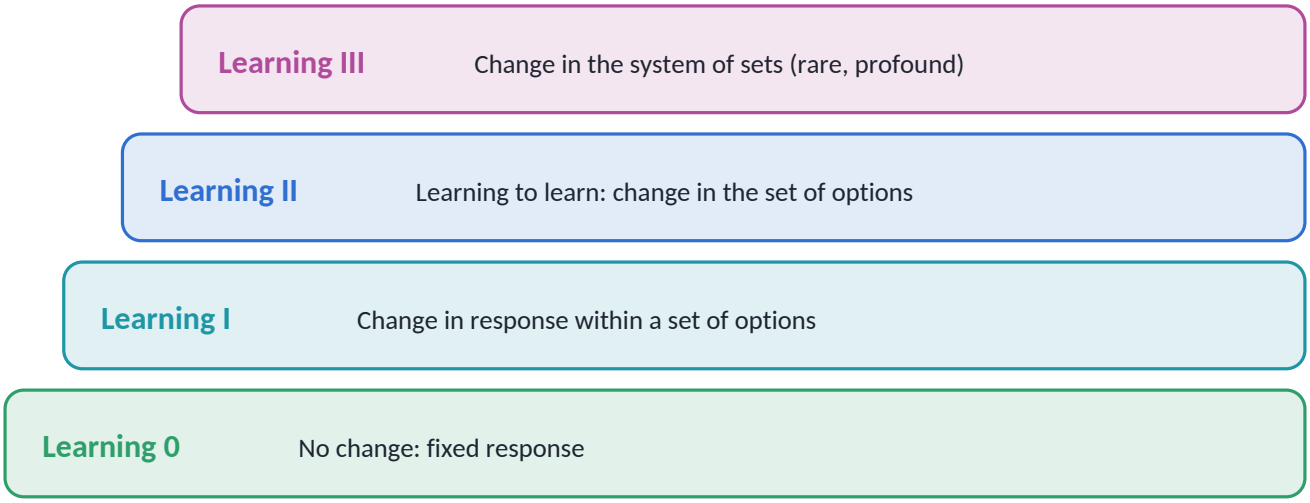


Model	Similarity	Key difference
Bateson's levels of learning	Learning about learning; levels of abstraction	Strictly about learning and context; not about identity or purpose as such
Maslow's hierarchy of needs	Layered; 'higher' levels include meaning and self-actualisation	Maslow ranks needs; Dilts maps levels of experience
The iceberg / culture models	Visible behaviour above, values below	Logical Levels adds explicit capability and purpose levels

SECTION 06

Bateson's Levels of Learning

Because Dilts credits Bateson as a key source, it is worth seeing Bateson's own levels. Each level of learning is a change in the level below it — a 'learning about learning'.



Bateson level	Everyday example	Rough Logical Levels parallel
Learning 0	Responding to the same alarm in the same way every time	Environment / reflex
Learning I	Learning to press the snooze button instead	Behaviour
Learning II	Becoming 'a person who learns new routines easily'	Capabilities / beliefs about learning
Learning III	A profound shift in the whole way one learns and experiences self	Identity and beyond

Caution

The parallels in the right-hand column are approximate. Critics argue that Dilts' levels are categories of experience rather than true Batesonian levels of learning (see Section 25).

SECTION 07

Level 1: Environment

Where? When?	Context	Senses
key question	what this level provides	where it is experienced

The environment is **everything outside the person**: the physical setting, the people present, the time, the culture and resources. It provides both opportunities and constraints. It is what we react to, and also what we choose and shape.

Questions to explore this level

- Where and when does this happen — or not happen?
- Who else is around? What resources are available?
- What in the surroundings helps or hinders?

Aspect	Description
Includes	Places, times, people, tools, money, culture, weather, systems
Typical problems	Wrong setting, distractions, lack of resources, poor timing
Typical change	Rearrange space, change schedule, find support, alter conditions

Example statement	What it reveals
“It's too noisy in this office to concentrate.”	An environmental constraint
“I study best in the library in the morning.”	An environmental resource

> **Practical tip**
>
> Before working on beliefs or identity, check the easy wins: is the environment actually set up for success? Sometimes moving a desk solves what looked like a motivation problem.

Where this level sits



← Toward lower levels

This level gives every level a real-world context

Toward higher levels →

This level shapes and responds to the environment

SECTION 08

Level 2: Behaviour

What?	Action	Muscles
key question	what this level provides	where it is experienced

Behaviour is **what a person actually does**: specific actions, words and reactions that can be seen and heard. Behaviour is where all the higher levels become visible, and where results in the environment are produced.

Questions to explore this level

- What specifically do you (or they) do?
- What happens first, next, and then?
- What would we see and hear if we watched a video of it?

Aspect	Description
Includes	Actions, habits, routines, reactions, words spoken
Typical problems	Bad habits, procrastination, inconsistent action
Typical change	Rehearsal, routines, prompts, reinforcement, clear instructions

Example statement	What it reveals
“I check email first thing every morning.”	A habitual behaviour
“He interrupts people in meetings.”	An observed behaviour

> **Feedback tip**
>
> Feedback is safest and most useful at the level of behaviour: specific, observable, and changeable. “You interrupted twice” is easier to act on than “You're rude”.

Where this level sits



← Toward lower levels

This level acts within and on the environment

Toward higher levels →

This level puts skills and strategies into action

SECTION 09

Level 3: Capabilities

How?	Direction	Mind
key question	what this level provides	where it is experienced

Capabilities are the **mental maps, strategies and skills** that direct and organise behaviour. A capability is not one action but the ability to produce a whole class of actions — for example, the capability to *listen well* produces many different listening behaviours.

Questions to explore this level

- How do you do that? What steps or strategy do you use?
- What skills or knowledge would make this easier?
- Who does this well, and how do they think about it?

Aspect	Description
Includes	Skills, knowledge, strategies, plans, mental models
Typical problems	Not knowing how; using an ineffective strategy
Typical change	Training, modelling an expert, practice, mentoring

Example statement	What it reveals
“I don't know how to start a presentation.”	A capability gap
“I always plan backwards from the deadline.”	A personal strategy

Modelling

NLP grew out of 'modelling' excellent performers. At this level the question is: what is the strategy that produces the excellent behaviour — and can it be learned?

Where this level sits

Environment | Behaviour | **Capabilities** | Beliefs | Identity | Purpose

← Toward lower levels

This level directs and selects behaviour

Toward higher levels →

This level is motivated and permitted by beliefs

SECTION 10

Level 4: Beliefs & Values

Why?	Permission	Heart
key question	what this level provides	where it is experienced

Beliefs and values provide the **motivation and permission** that support or inhibit capabilities. Values are what is important; beliefs are what we hold to be true about ourselves, others and the world. Together they answer *why* a person acts as they do.

Questions to explore this level

- Why is this important to you?
- What do you believe about yourself in this situation?
- What would you need to believe for this to be easy?

Aspect	Description
Includes	Values, beliefs, assumptions, rules, expectations
Typical problems	Limiting beliefs (“I'm not a numbers person”), value conflicts
Typical change	Questioning beliefs, re-framing, new reference experiences

Example statement	What it reveals
“It's not worth trying, I always fail exams.”	A limiting belief
“Fairness matters more to me than winning.”	A core value

Three classic limiting beliefs

Dilts highlights beliefs of **hopelessness** (“the goal isn't possible”), **helplessness** (“it's possible, but I can't do it”) and **worthlessness** (“I don't deserve it”).

Where this level sits



← Toward lower levels

This level motivates and permits capabilities

Toward higher levels →

This level expresses and protects identity

SECTION 11

Level 5: Identity

Who?	Mission	Self
key question	what this level provides	where it is experienced

Identity is a person's **sense of who they are**: their core self-image and the roles they take on. Identity organises beliefs, values and capabilities into a single sense of self, and is expressed as a sense of mission within one's roles.

Questions to explore this level

- Who are you when you do this?
- What kind of person does this?
- What role are you in, and how do you see yourself in it?

Aspect	Description
Includes	Self-image, roles, self-concept, 'I am' statements
Typical problems	Identity conflict, 'impostor' feelings, role confusion
Typical change	New role models, metaphors, re-imprinting, identity statements

Example statement	What it reveals
“I'm just not a creative person.”	A limiting identity statement
“As a parent, I want to be patient.”	A role-based identity

Why identity is powerful

People will defend their identity strongly. Change that respects and extends a person's identity (“you're a learner”) meets less resistance than change that attacks it (“you're lazy”).

Where this level sits



← Toward lower levels

This level organises beliefs and values

Toward higher levels →

This level is an expression of a larger purpose

SECTION 12

Level 6: Purpose

For whom?	Meaning	System
key question	what this level provides	where it is experienced

The highest level goes **beyond the individual** to the larger systems a person belongs to — family, team, community, profession, humanity. Dilts originally called it the 'spiritual' level; it is often described today as purpose, vision or mission.

Questions to explore this level

- For whom, or for what, are you doing this?
- What larger system are you part of?
- What do you want to contribute?

Aspect	Description
Includes	Vision, purpose, legacy, contribution, connection, meaning
Typical problems	Loss of meaning, burnout, feeling disconnected
Typical change	Vision work, purpose statements, reflection, service

Example statement	What it reveals
“I teach because every child deserves a chance.”	Purpose expressed through a role
“I just don't know what it's all for any more.”	Loss of connection to purpose

Vision vs. mission

In Dilts' later work, **vision** is the bigger picture of the world a person or organisation wants to help create; **mission** is their particular contribution to it (identity level).

Where this level sits

Environment | Behaviour | Capabilities | Beliefs | Identity | **Purpose**

← Toward lower levels

This level gives direction to identity

Toward higher levels →

This level connects the person to the wider system

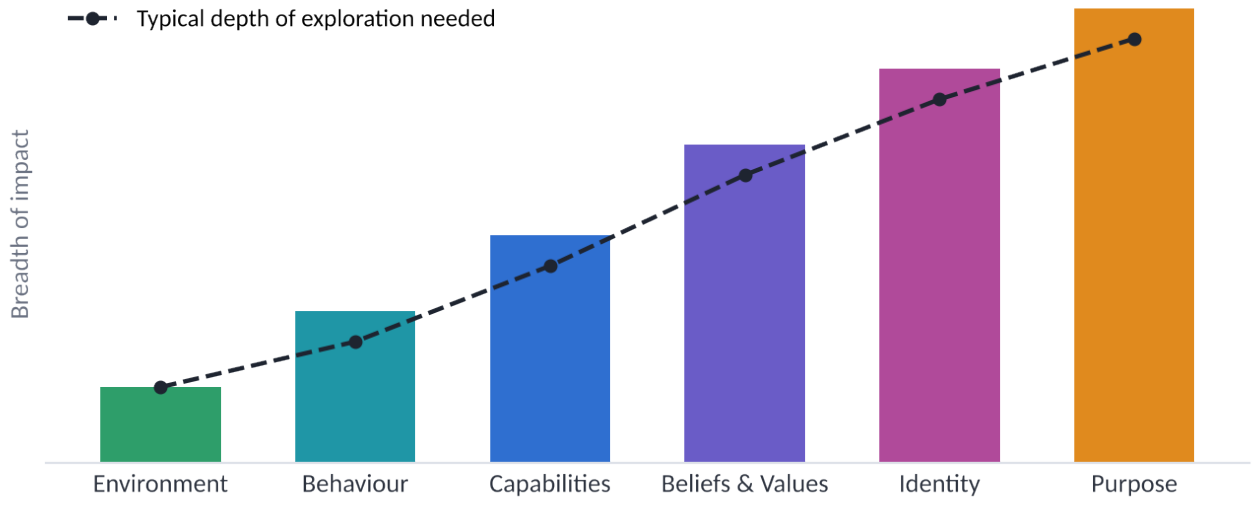
SECTION 13

The 'Neuro' in Neuro-Logical Levels

Dilts suggested that each level involves progressively deeper and wider engagement of the nervous system. Higher levels were said to mobilise more of the whole body and mind. This is a **speculative proposal**, not an established neuroscientific finding, but it explains the model's name.

Level	Nervous-system involvement (as proposed by Dilts)	Experience
Purpose	The nervous system as a whole, and beyond the individual	Feeling part of something larger
Identity	Deep life-sustaining systems (e.g. immune, endocrine)	Whole-self commitment
Beliefs & Values	Autonomic nervous system (e.g. heart rate, pupil dilation)	Strong emotional response
Capabilities	Cortical systems; semi-conscious actions	Mental planning and strategy
Behaviour	Motor system (pyramidal & cerebellum)	Conscious and practised action
Environment	Peripheral nervous system: senses and reflexes	Sensing and reacting

Breadth of impact (conceptual)



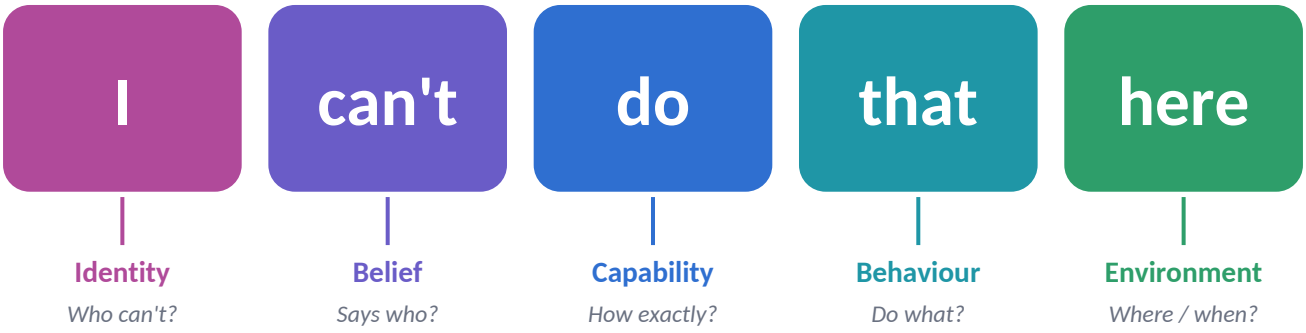
A conceptual illustration of the model's claim, not measured data: higher levels affect more of a person's life, and usually take deeper exploration to change.

SECTION 14

Recognising Levels in Language

People reveal the level they are operating from in the way they talk. A famous Dilts example shows how the same sentence shifts level depending on which word is stressed.

“I can't do that here.”

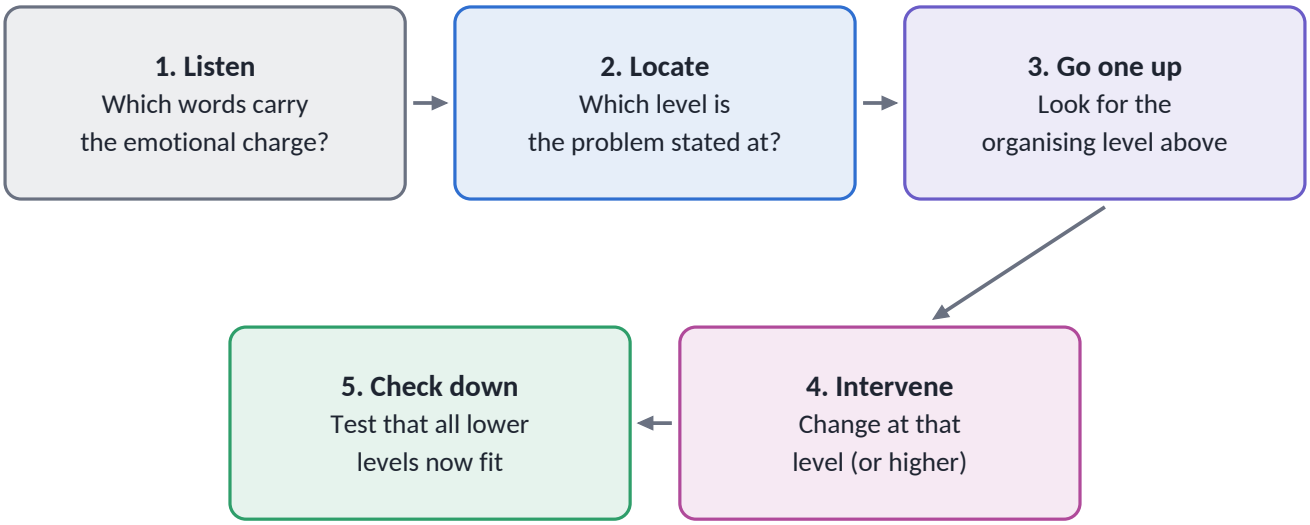


Level	Sentence stems	Key words
Purpose	“I'm here to …”, “This is for …”	vision, mission, contribute, serve, legacy
Identity	“I am …”, “I'm the kind of person who …”	I am, role, person, who, self
Beliefs & Values	“I believe …”, “It's important that …”	should, must, important, true, why, because
Capabilities	“I know how to …”, “I'm good / bad at …”	can, how, skill, know, able
Behaviour	“I did …”, “I always …”	action verbs, did, said, do
Environment	“The office is …”, “They …”	place, time, people, things, there

SECTION 15

Diagnosing the Level of a Problem

A key use of the model is to locate the *real* level of an issue. Problems are often presented at one level but maintained at another.



Same complaint, different levels

"I can't speak up in meetings" because ...	Level	Likely intervention
... the meetings are always at 8 a.m. and I'm exhausted.	Environment	Change timing or prepare differently
... I never get the agenda in advance, so I don't prepare.	Behaviour	Build a preparation routine
... I don't know how to make a point concisely.	Capabilities	Practise structuring short contributions
... I think my ideas aren't worth hearing.	Beliefs	Explore evidence; re-frame the belief
... I'm just a quiet, behind-the-scenes person.	Identity	Expand self-image: 'a thoughtful contributor'
... I don't see what difference it makes.	Purpose	Reconnect with why the work matters

Listen for the charge

The level where a person's voice changes, they pause, or their emotion rises is often the level that holds the problem in place — even if they first described it at another level.

SECTION 16

Matching Interventions to Levels

A common error is to apply an intervention at the wrong level — for example, sending someone on a skills course when the real block is a belief. The table matches typical problems to the kind of support that tends to fit them.

Level	Support / intervention	Role of the helper (Dilts)
Purpose	Vision work, reflection, connecting to the wider system	Awakener
Identity	Mentoring, role models, identity-level acknowledgement	Sponsor
Beliefs & Values	Mentoring, re-framing, belief change work	Mentor
Capabilities	Teaching, training, modelling	Teacher
Behaviour	Coaching, practice, feedback	Coach
Environment	Guiding, caretaking, providing resources	Guide / caretaker

Coaching with a capital 'C'

In his book *From Coach to Awakener* (2003), Dilts distinguishes 'small c' coaching — improving behavioural performance — from 'large C' Coaching, which supports people at every level. Each helper role corresponds to a level.

Guide
Provides the right environment and conditions

Teacher
Develops skills and capabilities

Sponsor
Recognises and supports who someone is

Coach
Improves specific behaviours and performance

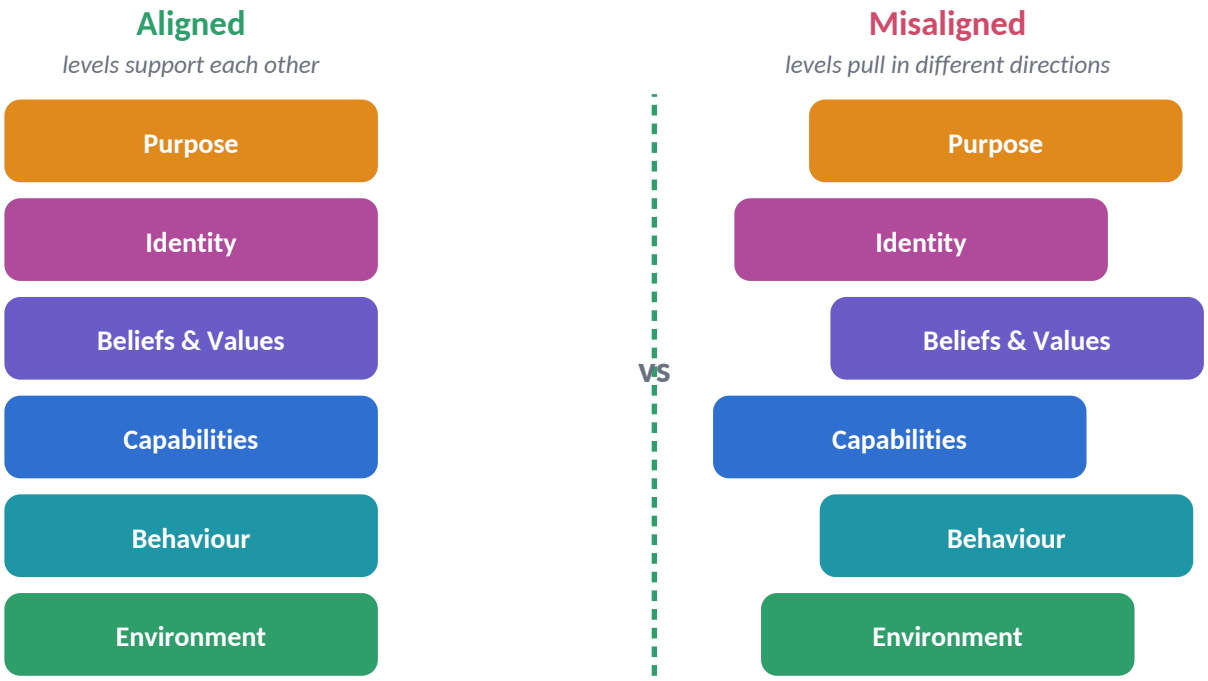
Mentor
Shapes and strengthens beliefs and values

Awakener
Helps people connect with purpose and vision

SECTION 17

Alignment & Congruence

When the levels support each other, a person acts with **congruence**: what they value, who they are and what they do all fit. When they conflict, people feel stuck, torn or half-hearted — and others notice the mixed messages.



Misalignment	Example	Typical experience
Values vs behaviour	Values health but eats on the run every day	Guilt, inner conflict
Identity vs environment	Sees self as creative, but the job is purely routine	Frustration, boredom
Capability vs belief	Has the skills but believes 'I'm not ready'	Procrastination, self-sabotage
Purpose vs identity	Wants to help others but sees self as 'just an employee'	Loss of meaning

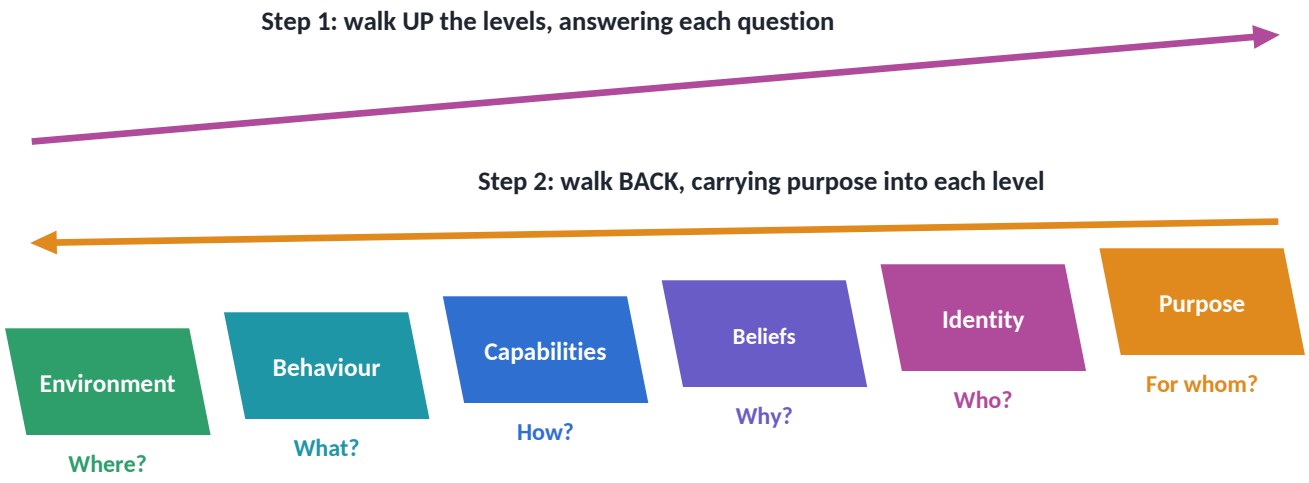
Signs of alignment

- Decisions feel easy and are made quickly.
- Energy is high; effort feels worthwhile.
- Words, tone and actions send one consistent message.
- Setbacks are treated as feedback rather than as threats to the self.

SECTION 18

The Logical Levels Alignment Process

A well-known NLP exercise uses **physical space**. The six levels are laid out on the floor (with paper cards) in a line. The explorer steps onto each one in turn, answering the question for that level while a guide asks questions and listens.



Step	What to do
1. Choose a context	Pick a specific role or situation where you want more alignment.
2. Environment	Stand on the first card. Describe where and when, in sensory detail.
3. Behaviour	Step forward. What do you do in that environment?
4. Capabilities	Step forward. What skills and strategies guide those actions?
5. Beliefs & values	Step forward. Why do you do it? What is important and true for you?
6. Identity	Step forward. Who are you, as someone with these beliefs?
7. Purpose	Step forward. For whom, or for what? Notice the larger picture.

What you need

Six sheets of paper labelled with the level names, a clear line of floor about three metres long, and 30–45 minutes. The guide stands beside the explorer and moves with them.

Walking Back Down: Bringing Purpose Into Action

The second half of the process is where most of the value lies. Carrying the experience of the purpose space, the explorer steps **backwards** through each level, noticing how it is enriched or changed.

Step back to ...	Guide's question	Example answer
Identity	“With this sense of purpose, who are you?”	“I'm someone who opens doors for people.”
Beliefs & values	“What do you now believe and value?”	“Everyone has potential worth developing.”
Capabilities	“How does this change what you can do?”	“I can listen more patiently.”
Behaviour	“What will you do differently?”	“Ask questions before giving answers.”
Environment	“How do you experience this place now?”	“It feels like a place of opportunity.”

Guidance for the guide

- Keep questions short and clean; let the explorer find their own words.
- Allow time on each card — especially identity and purpose.
- Notice physiology: posture, breathing and voice often shift noticeably at higher levels.
- Anchor the final state, e.g. with a gesture or a word to recall later.
- Finish with one concrete next action in the real environment.

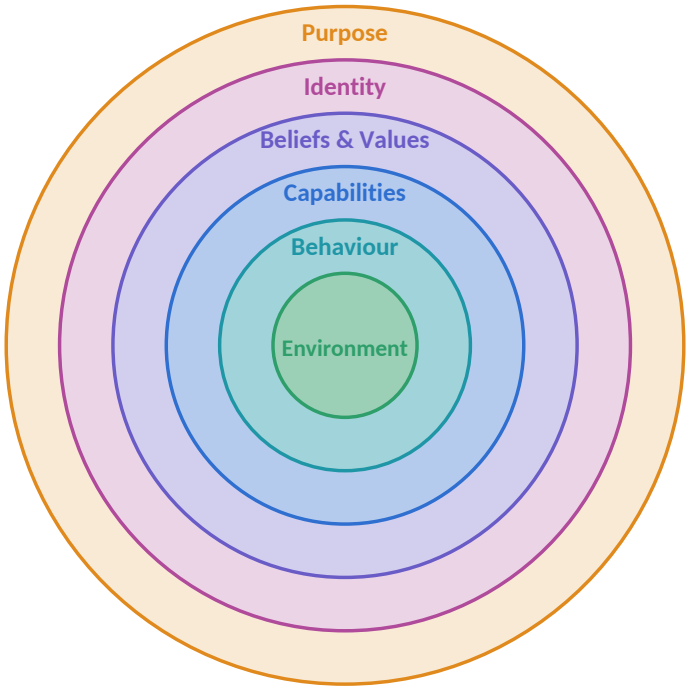
> **Solo version**
>
> The process can be done alone by writing answers on six sheets of paper and physically moving between them. Moving the body helps keep the levels distinct.

SECTION 19

Ladder or Nested Circles?

The model is usually drawn as a pyramid or ladder, which suggests that higher levels are 'better' or more important. Dilts and others have also drawn it as **nested circles**, in which each level contains and includes the levels inside it.

Nested circles



Ladder / pyramid



Representation	Emphasises	Risk
Pyramid / ladder	Order of influence; 'going up' to find leverage	Implies lower levels are less important
Nested circles	Each level contains the others; wholeness	Harder to show direction of influence
Floor line (alignment)	Experiential movement through levels	Can feel linear and procedural

Balance

Whichever image you use, all levels are needed. A clear purpose without capability or a supportive environment remains a dream.

SECTION 20

Application: Coaching & Personal Development

Coaches use Logical Levels to structure sessions, set goals that are aligned across levels, and check that a plan is realistic as well as inspiring.

Goal-setting across the levels

Level	Coaching question	Example: "I want to run a marathon"
Purpose	What larger purpose does this goal serve?	Raising money for a cause I care about
Identity	Who will you be when you achieve it?	A runner; someone who finishes what they start
Beliefs & Values	Why does it matter? What must you believe?	Health matters; I can improve with training
Capabilities	What skills will you need?	Pacing, nutrition, injury prevention
Behaviour	What will you actually do?	Four runs a week following a 16-week plan
Environment	Where, when, with whom?	Mornings, local park, a running club

Coaching insight

Goals that are defined only at the behaviour level ("run four times a week") often fade. Goals connected to identity and purpose tend to survive setbacks better — but still need concrete behaviour and environment to happen.

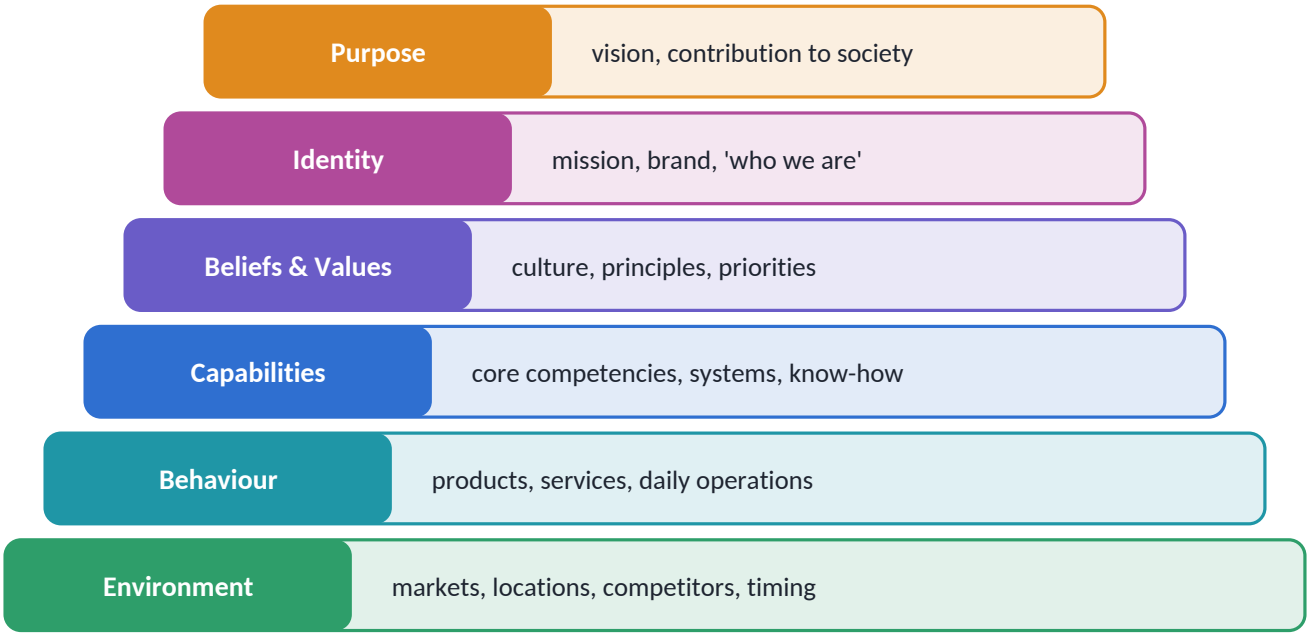
Warning signs in a goal

Sign	Missing level	Fix
"I know what to do, but I never do it."	Beliefs / identity	Explore why it matters and who you are when you do it
"I'm inspired, but nothing changes."	Behaviour / environment	Define the first concrete action, time and place
"I keep trying and failing."	Capabilities	Learn a better strategy or get training

SECTION 21

Application: Leadership & Organisations

Dilts applies the same levels to teams and organisations. Strategy, culture and change programmes can be examined level by level to see where they are strong, weak or misaligned.



Leadership task	Most relevant level	Leader's question
Change management	All levels	Have we addressed why and who, not just what?
Culture building	Beliefs & Values, Identity	What do we stand for, and who are we as a team?
Training programmes	Capabilities	Do people know how — and believe it matters?
Process improvement	Behaviour, Environment	Are systems and conditions supporting good work?
Vision and strategy	Purpose, Identity	What is our contribution to the wider world?

Example: why culture change fails

A company announces new values (beliefs level) but keeps rewarding old behaviours and leaves systems unchanged (behaviour and environment). Staff notice the mismatch and the values become a poster on the wall. Lasting change needs every level to line up.

SECTION 22

Application: Teaching & Learning

Teachers can use the levels to understand why a student struggles and to design lessons that work on more than one level at once.

Level	Classroom focus	Teacher's move
Purpose	Why learning matters beyond the test	Link topics to real lives and communities
Identity	Students' self-image as learners	“You're a mathematician when you reason like that.”
Beliefs & Values	Beliefs about ability and effort	Praise strategy and effort; normalise mistakes
Capabilities	Study skills, strategies, understanding	Model thinking aloud; teach how to learn
Behaviour	Participation, homework, attention	Clear routines and specific feedback
Environment	Classroom layout, resources, timing	Seating, materials, calm space

A struggling student, seen through the levels

Observation	Possible level	Response
Never brings books	Environment / behaviour	Check home circumstances; keep a class set
Hands in incomplete work	Capabilities	Break tasks down; teach a planning strategy
Says “I'm stupid at science”	Belief / identity	Gather evidence of success; re-frame the label

Watch for identity labels

Labels such as “slow learner” operate at identity level and can become self-fulfilling. Describe what a student *did* or *can't yet do*, and keep identity statements positive and growth-oriented.

One lesson, several levels

- **Purpose:** open with why the topic matters in the real world.
- **Capability:** model the strategy step by step.
- **Behaviour:** give practice with specific feedback.
- **Identity:** close by naming students as scientists, writers, or problem-solvers.

SECTION 23

Feedback & Praise at the Right Level

A practical rule that comes from the model: **criticise behaviour, praise identity** — or at least be specific about which level you are addressing. Negative comments aimed at identity can feel like an attack on the self; positive comments aimed at identity can be deeply motivating.

"You are careless."
criticism at IDENTITY

"That report had three errors."
criticism at BEHAVIOUR

"Good job."
vague praise

"You're a thorough analyst."
praise at IDENTITY

Level	Positive feedback	Developmental feedback
Identity	"You're a real problem-solver."	Avoid: "You're hopeless."
Beliefs & Values	"Your commitment to quality shows."	"How important is accuracy to you here?"
Capabilities	"Your planning skills have improved."	"Let's work on structuring the summary."
Behaviour	"You followed up within an hour."	"The deadline was missed by two days."
Environment	"You set up a great workspace."	"What would help you focus better here?"

Nuance

Identity-level praise works best when it is **sincere and backed by evidence** from behaviour. Some research on praise (e.g. Carol Dweck's work on mindset) suggests praising effort and strategy can also be powerful, especially for children.

Guidelines

- Be specific: name the behaviour or skill you observed.
- Separate the person from the action when giving criticism.
- Link positive behaviour upward: "That follow-up shows how much you care about clients."
- Ask before telling at belief level: invite reflection rather than imposing values.

SECTION 24

Self-Assessment: Your Alignment Profile

Choose one area of life — work, a relationship, health, or a project. Rate each level from 0 (not at all) to 10 (fully) for how clear, satisfying and aligned it feels.

Level	Rate 0–10 on …	Your score
Purpose	I know what this is ultimately for	
Identity	This fits who I am	
Beliefs & Values	This reflects what matters to me	
Capabilities	I have the skills I need	
Behaviour	I consistently do what's needed	
Environment	My surroundings support me	



Chart: a hypothetical client before and after a coaching programme. Example scores only.

Reading the profile

- The **lowest** score is a candidate focus area.
- Look **one level above** it for leverage.
- Large gaps between neighbouring levels suggest misalignment.
- Re-rate after a few weeks to track change.

Your lowest level	The level above it	One action this week

SECTION 25

Critique & Limitations

Logical Levels is popular and intuitive, but it has been criticised — including by people within the NLP and coaching communities.

Critique	Explanation
Not true 'logical types'	Writers such as Paul Tosey and James Lawley & Penny Tompkins argue the levels do not follow Russell's or Bateson's logic: e.g. 'behaviour' is not a class of which 'environment' is a member.
Mixed categories	The levels combine different kinds of things (places, actions, skills, beliefs, a sense of self) rather than one thing at increasing levels of abstraction.
Little empirical research	There are few controlled studies testing the hierarchy, the 'one level up' rule, or the proposed neurological correlates.
Hierarchy can mislead	A pyramid implies higher levels are always more important; in practice environment or capability is sometimes the real issue.
Over-simplification	Real experience is messy; a belief, a skill and a habit are often tangled together.

What remains useful

Strength	Why it helps
Shared vocabulary	Gives coaches, teams and clients simple words for different aspects of change
Structured questions	Where, what, how, why, who, for whom — an easy checklist
Level awareness	Reminds us to check whether a solution fits the problem's level
Alignment focus	Encourages goals that are inspiring and practical at the same time

> **Balanced view**
>
> Treat Logical Levels as a **useful thinking tool** rather than a scientific theory of the mind.

Using the model responsibly

- Present it as a framework for reflection, not as proven science.
- Avoid over-claiming about the nervous system or 'deep' change.
- Check practical levels (environment, skills) before assuming a deep issue.
- Refer clinical problems to qualified professionals.

SECTION 26

Practice Exercises

Short activities to build fluency with the model. Most take 10–20 minutes.

1. **Six-question check-in**
   Pick today's main task. Answer: where/when, what, how, why, who, for whom. Notice which answer was hardest.

2. **Stress the words**
   Say “I can't do that here” five times, stressing a different word each time. Notice how the meaning shifts.

3. **Find the level**
   Listen to a friend's complaint. Silently note the level of each statement. Which level carries the most emotion?

4. **Belief audit**
   Write three beliefs that help you in your work and three that limit you. For each limiting one, ask: what would I need to believe instead?

5. **Identity statement**
   Complete: “In this role, I am someone who …” five times. Choose the one that feels most energising.

6. **Purpose letter**
   Write a short letter from your future self describing what your work made possible for others.

7. **Floor walk**
   Lay out six sheets of paper and do the full alignment process in Section 18, alone or with a partner.

8. **Feedback rewrite**
   Take a piece of feedback you plan to give. Rewrite it so criticism is at behaviour level and praise at identity level.

SECTION 27

Quick Reference

Level	Question	Key words	Helper role	Change via
Purpose	For whom?	vision, mission, serve	Awakener	Vision, reflection
Identity	Who?	I am, role, self	Sponsor	Role models, metaphor
Beliefs & Values	Why?	believe, important, should	Mentor	Re-framing, evidence
Capabilities	How?	can, know how, skill	Teacher	Training, modelling
Behaviour	What?	do, did, action verbs	Coach	Practice, feedback
Environment	Where? When?	place, time, people	Guide	Resources, setting

The core move

Listen for the level → go one level up → intervene → check every level below fits.

Everyday rules

Criticise behaviour, praise identity. Align goals from purpose down to environment.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Logical type	Russell's idea that a class is of a different type from its members
Alignment	When all levels support one another
Congruence	Words, actions and values fit together
Level confusion	Treating an issue at the wrong level
Limiting belief	A belief that restricts what a person thinks is possible
Awakener	Dilts' term for a helper who supports purpose-level change