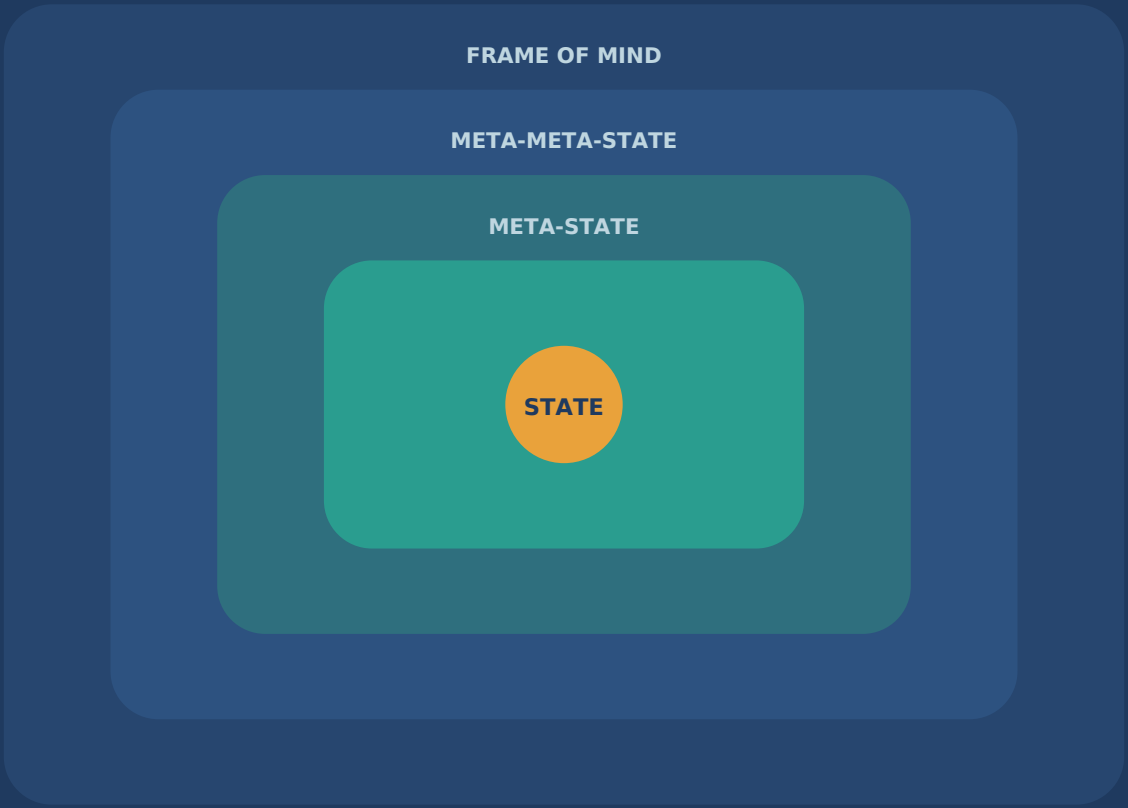


NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING · A VISUAL SUMMARY

Neuro-Semantics & Meta-States

An introduction and practical guide to "states about states"

Concepts · Models · Patterns · Worked Examples · Worksheet

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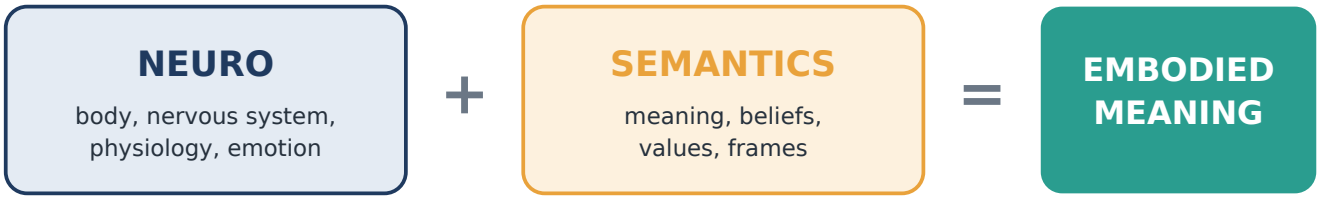
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SECTION 01

What Is Neuro-Semantics?

A development of NLP that focuses on meaning — how the layers of thoughts and feelings we hold about our experience shape that experience.

Classic NLP studies the **structure** of experience: how we use the senses, language and internal representations to create states. **Neuro-Semantics** adds a focus on **meaning**: how the body–mind (*neuro*) responds to the meanings (*semantics*) we give events — especially the meanings we give to our own thoughts and feelings. Its central model is **Meta-States**.



NLP and Neuro-Semantics compared

Aspect	Classic NLP	Neuro-Semantics
Main question	How is this experience structured?	What does this experience mean to you — and what frames hold it?
Primary focus	Sensory representations, sub-modalities, language patterns	Meaning-making, higher frames, self-reflexive layers
Key model	Representational systems, Meta-Model, Milton Model	Meta-States, Matrix Model, Meaning–Performance Axes
Direction of attention	Mostly horizontal (stimulus → response)	Mostly vertical (thoughts about thoughts)
Typical aim	Change a response or behaviour	Change the frames that keep a response in place, then embody them

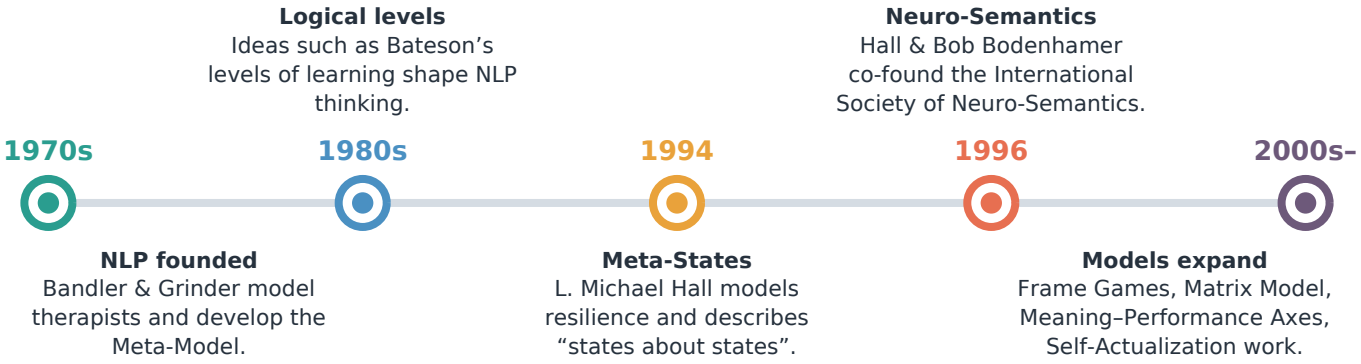
> **In one sentence:** Neuro-Semantics is about *making meaning* and then *making it real* — turning what we know is important into how we actually feel and act.

SECTION 02

Origins and Background

Meta-States grew out of research into self-reflexive consciousness and was later organised into a wider field called Neuro-Semantics.

A short timeline



Key influences

Gregory Bateson

Logical levels of learning and the idea that higher levels frame lower ones.

Alfred Korzybski

General Semantics: "the map is not the territory"; neuro-semantic reactions.

Abraham Maslow

Self-actualisation and peak experiences — later central to Neuro-Semantics.

Classic NLP

States, anchoring, the Meta-Model, modelling excellence.

BALANCED VIEW

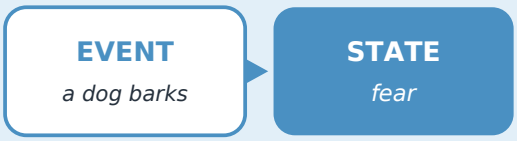
A note on evidence. Neuro-Semantics, like NLP, has developed mainly through training, modelling and practitioner experience rather than controlled research, and NLP as a whole has limited empirical support. Several of its ideas, though, echo better-studied fields — metacognition, cognitive reappraisal, acceptance-based approaches and self-compassion. Use it as a practical reflection and coaching tool, not as a substitute for professional treatment.

SECTION 03

Primary States vs Meta-States

A primary state is about something out in the world. A meta-state is a state about another state — a thought or feeling about your own thoughts and feelings.

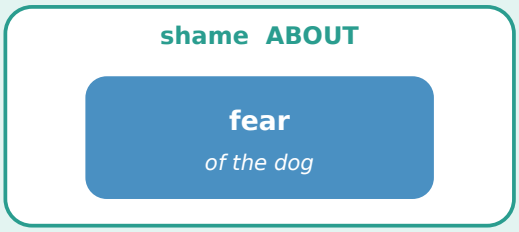
PRIMARY STATE



Directed **outward**. Usually simple, primary emotions: fear, anger, joy, relaxation.

Level 1 · about the world

META-STATE



Directed **inward**, at your own state. Creates layered, complex experiences.

Level 2+ · about my state

Same primary state — very different experiences

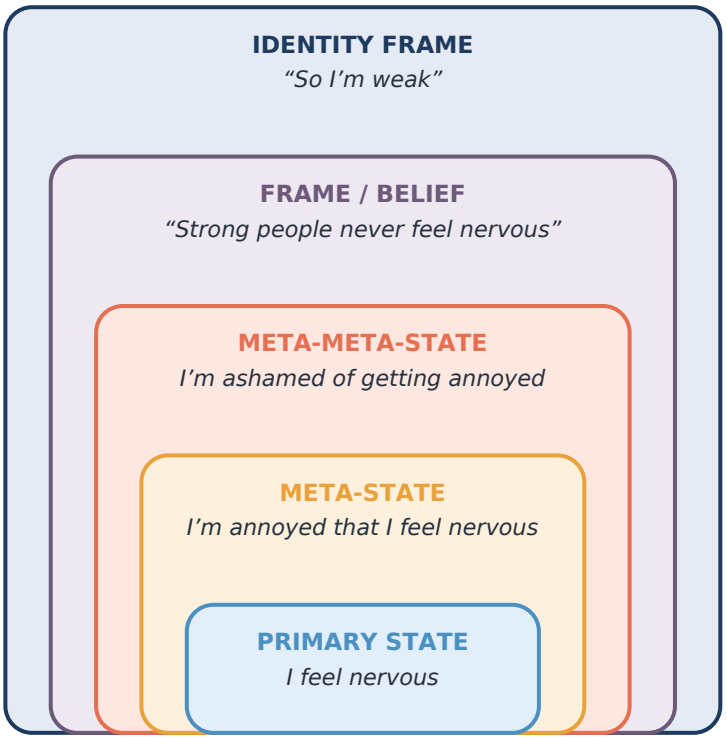
Primary state	Meta-state applied	Resulting experience
Fear	Shame about the fear	Hiding, freezing, self-criticism — fear grows
Fear	Curiosity about the fear	Exploring what it signals — fear becomes information
Anger	Guilt about the anger	Suppression, then outbursts
Anger	Calm respect for the anger	Assertiveness — clear, controlled expression
Learning	Joy about learning	Playful, persistent practice
Learning	Fear of looking stupid while learning	Avoidance, perfectionism, slow progress

Key insight: often the problem is not the primary state itself, but the **state about the state**. Changing the higher layer can transform the whole experience.

SECTION 04

Self-Reflexive Consciousness

Humans can think about their thinking, feel about their feeling — and keep going. Each new layer sets a frame for the ones below.



Reading the diagram: each box sits *inside* a larger one. The outer frames are less obvious but more powerful — they set the rules for what the inner states mean.

- The nervousness itself is ordinary and passes quickly.
- The layers above turn it into a lasting problem about identity.
- Change the outer frame ("nervousness is energy for performing") and the whole stack reorganises.

Signs you are dealing with a meta-level issue

You notice…	Likely meta-structure
The feeling is out of proportion to the event	A higher frame is amplifying it
"I shouldn't feel this way"	Rejection / judgement of a primary state
Techniques work briefly, then the problem returns	An unchanged frame re-creates it
The problem spreads across many contexts	A belief about self, others or the world

SECTION 05

Core Principles

A handful of working assumptions run through the Meta-States model. They explain why changing a frame can change an experience.

1 Higher frames govern lower states

Like a thermostat over a heater, the higher level sets the conditions for the lower one.

2 Meaning is constructed

Events do not carry fixed meanings; we attach meanings — and can revise them.

3 States are mind-body-emotion

A state is a whole-system experience: thinking, feeling, physiology together.

4 Consciousness is layered

We can always step back and have a further thought or feeling about any state.

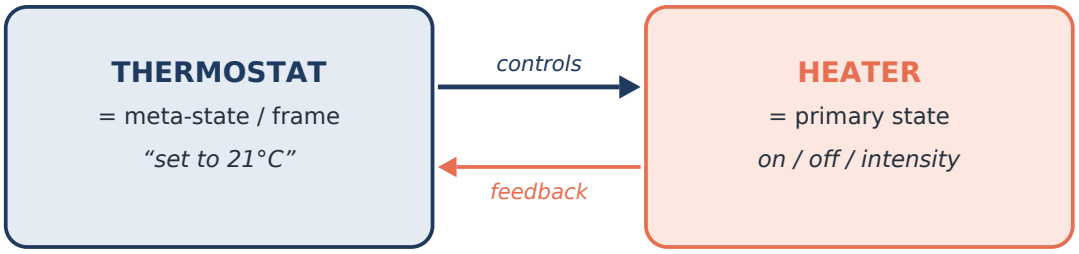
5 Frames become “in the muscle”

Repeated frames turn into habits, beliefs and automatic responses.

6 Structure, not content, drives change

How a state is framed matters more than the story about it.

The thermostat analogy



Turning the heater on and off by hand works only briefly. **Resetting the thermostat** changes the system’s behaviour from then on.

SECTION 06

What a Meta-State Does

When one state is brought to bear on another, it does not just add to it. It can change the lower state in several different ways.

AMPLIFY



Intensifies the primary state

Fear about fear → panic spiral

REDUCE



Dampens or soothes it

Calm about anger → anger softens

NEGATE



Cancels or interrupts it

Doubt about a doubt → confidence

PARADOX



Creates a self-defeating loop

Trying hard to relax → tension

TEXTURE



Adds a new quality or colour

Respect about anger → firm, fair anger

GESTALT



Creates a new whole state

Fear + boldness + values → courage

Choosing a helpful meta-state

If the primary state is…	Unhelpful meta-state (often automatic)	Helpful meta-state to try
Anxiety before an exam	Panic about the anxiety	Acceptance and focus about the anxiety
Sadness after a loss	Shame about being sad	Compassion and permission about the sadness
Making a mistake	Contempt for myself for erring	Curiosity about what I can learn
Feeling criticised	Defensiveness about the hurt	Calm respect for my own worth while I listen

The effect of a meta-state depends on its **quality** — kindness, curiosity and acceptance tend to calm and organise; contempt, fear and rejection tend to amplify and fragment.

SECTION 07

The Meta-Stating Process

Meta-stating means deliberately bringing a resourceful state to bear on another state or experience. It is commonly taught as a sequence of "A" steps.

	WHAT YOU DO	EXAMPLE PROMPT
1 AWARENESS	Notice the current state and the frames around it.	*"What am I feeling — and what am I feeling about that?"*
2 ACCESS	Recall or imagine a resource state (e.g. calm, curiosity).	*"When have I felt fully calm?"*
3 AMPLIFY	Strengthen the resource until it is vivid and felt in the body.	*"Double it… and again."*
4 APPLY	Bring the resource to bear on the target state.	*"Feel calm about this nervousness."*
5 APPROPRIATE	Decide where and when you want it in future.	*"Where would this help me most?"*
6 ANALYSE	Check ecology: does it fit your values and life?	*"Does any part of me object?"*
7 ACCELERATE	Rehearse and future-pace so it becomes automatic.	*"Imagine next Monday's meeting with this."*

Mini-script: "Think of the situation… notice the feeling… now recall a time you felt deeply *calm and kind toward yourself*… let it grow… and bring that calm kindness *to* the feeling. What happens to it now?" Variations of the sequence exist; the essentials are access, amplify, apply and check.

SECTION 08

Gestalt States

Some of our most valuable states — courage, resilience, wisdom, charisma — are not single feelings but emerge from several states layered together.

A **gestalt** is a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. In Meta-States, rich states are built by layering simpler ones. Understanding the ingredients lets you assemble them deliberately.



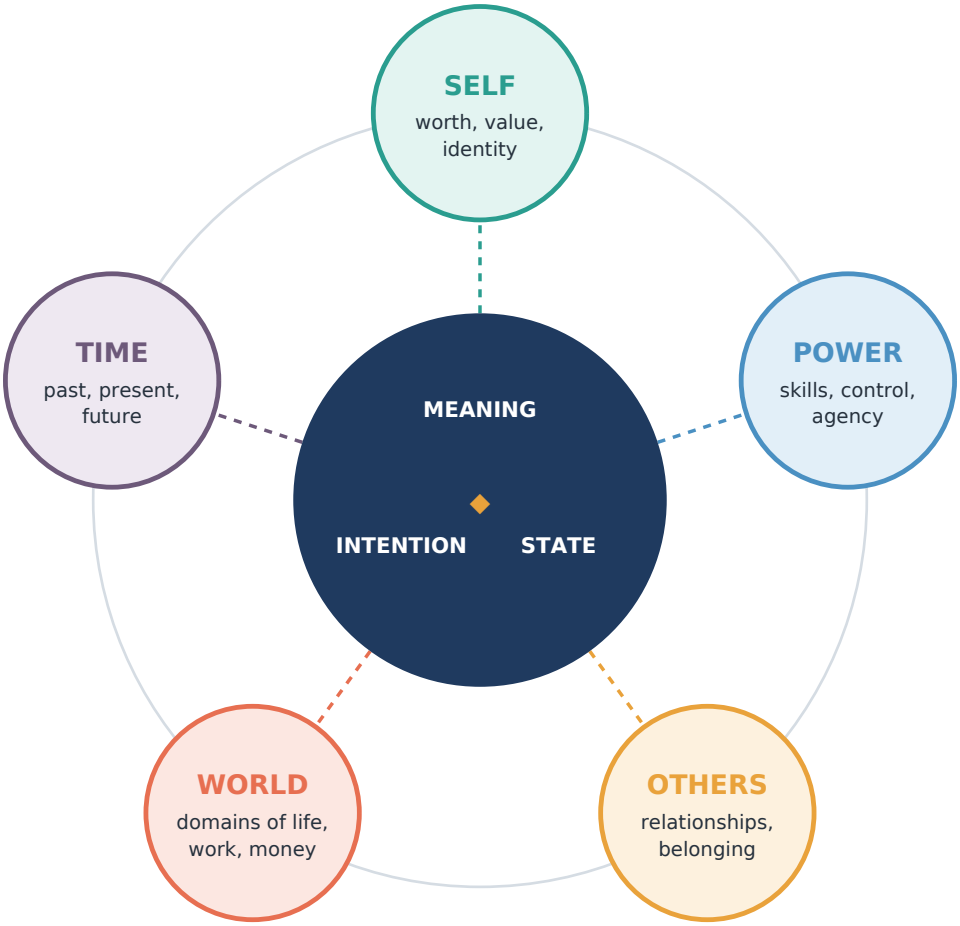
Building a gestalt state — step by step

Step	What to do	Example: courage to speak up in a meeting
1 · Name the target	Choose the gestalt state you want.	Courage to share a different opinion.
2 · List ingredients	Ask: what states would make it up?	Acknowledged nerves, respect for my view, care for the team.
3 · Access each one	Recall a time you felt each state fully.	Remember defending a friend; remember a time I felt respected.
4 · Layer them	Apply each state to the previous one.	Respect for my view about my nerves; care for the team about both.
5 · Test & rehearse	Imagine the context and step into it.	Picture Tuesday’s meeting and speak the first sentence.

SECTION 09

The Matrix Model

The Matrix Model maps the frames that surround any experience. It works like a diagnostic map for coaching conversations.



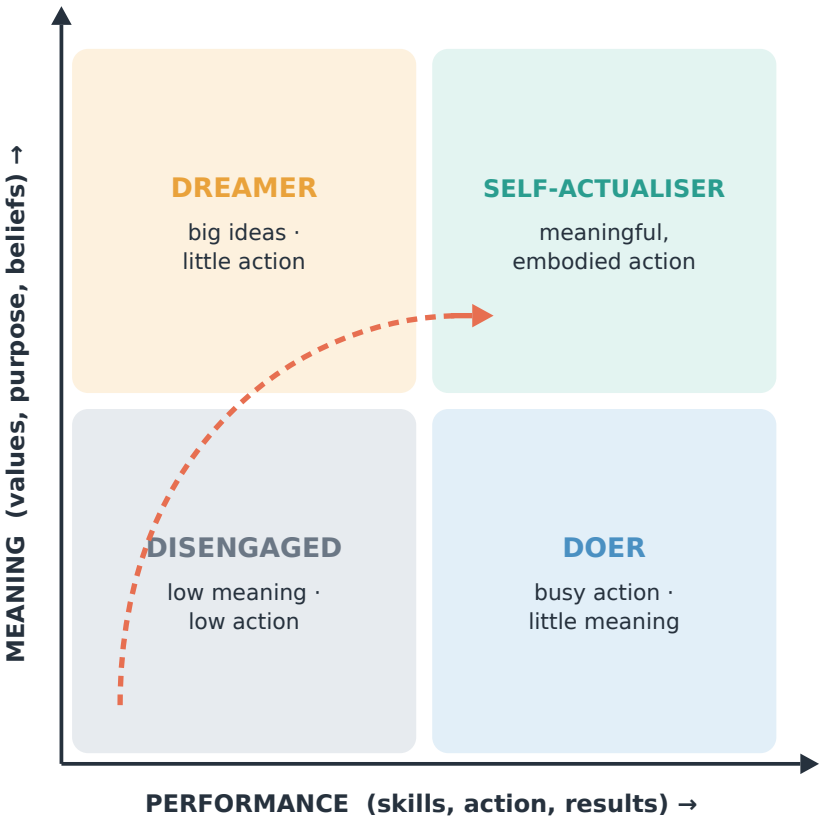
Centre: three process matrices · Outer ring: five content matrices

Matrix	Type	Typical coaching question
Meaning	Process	What does this mean to you? What do you believe about it?
Intention	Process	What do you want? What is important about that?
State	Process	What state are you in when this happens?
Self	Content	What does this say about you? How do you value yourself here?
Power	Content	What can you do? What is within your control?
Others	Content	Who is involved? What do you believe about them?
World	Content	Which area of life is this — work, money, health, love?
Time	Content	How do the past and future frame this for you?

SECTION 10

The Meaning–Performance Axes

A Neuro-Semantics model of self-actualisation: lasting fulfilment comes from uniting rich meaning with effective action.



How to read it

- **Meaning** (vertical) is what you believe and value — the frames you hold.
- **Performance** (horizontal) is what you actually do — skills and behaviour.
- Meaning without action leaves you a *dreamer*; action without meaning leaves you a busy *doer*.
- Meta-stating raises meaning; Mind-to-Muscle (page 15) turns meaning into action.

Moving up and across

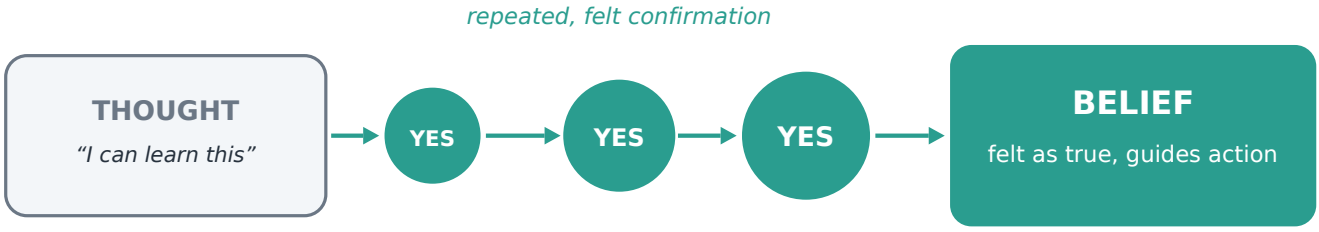
If you are mostly a…	You need more…	Useful Neuro-Semantic moves
Dreamer	Performance	Mind-to-Muscle; chunk down to small actions; rehearse
Doer	Meaning	Ask “What is important about that?”; meta-state purpose and appreciation
Disengaged	Both	Meta-Yes to one value; take one tiny action that expresses it
Self-actualiser	Sustaining	Meta-state gratitude and growth; keep stretching goals

SECTION 11

Pattern · Meta-Yes / Meta-No

We confirm beliefs by repeatedly saying “yes” to them at a higher level. The same mechanism can install empowering beliefs and weaken limiting ones.

In the model, a **thought** becomes a **belief** when we confirm it — when we say “yes” to it, at a meta-level, with conviction. A Meta-No rejects a limiting idea; a Meta-Yes validates a new, empowering one.



META-NO · weaken a limiting belief

1. Name the limiting belief: “I’m not a numbers person.”
2. Notice how it limits you — and access a strong, clear “No!” (recall refusing something firmly).
3. Say that No to the belief: “No! I refuse to let that idea run my life.”
4. Check how true it feels now (0–10).

META-YES · confirm an empowering belief

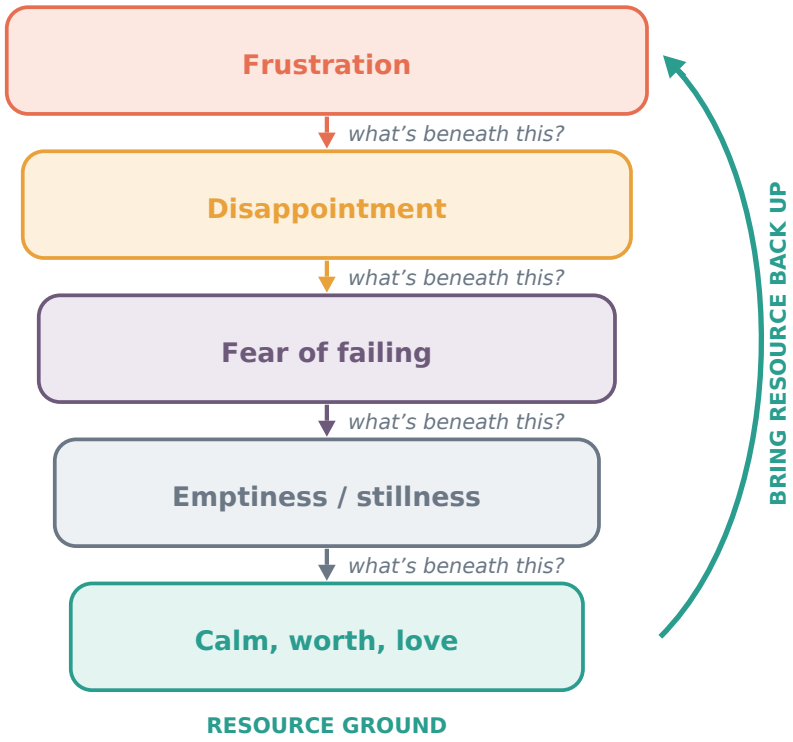
1. Write the new belief: “I can learn numbers with practice.”
2. Access a powerful “Yes!” (recall a time you were absolutely certain).
3. Say Yes to the belief — repeatedly, with feeling and gesture.
4. Future-pace: imagine acting from it next week.

Tip: belief strength can be tracked with a simple 0–10 rating before and after. If the new belief doesn’t “take”, look for an **ecology objection** — part of you may need the old belief for a reason.

SECTION 12

Pattern · Drop Down Through

A pattern for dissolving a stuck negative state by gently moving down through the layers beneath it until a calm, resourceful ground is reached.



Steps

1. Identify the unwanted state and where you feel it in your body.
2. Step into it just enough to notice it — then ask "what's beneath this?"
3. Let yourself drop down to the next feeling. Name it.
4. Repeat until you reach a sense of stillness or emptiness.
5. Keep going through it until a resourceful state appears (often calm, love or worth).
6. Bring that resource back up through each layer, noticing how each one changes.

When to use it — and when not to

Suitable for	Approach with care / avoid
Everyday frustration, irritation, mild worry	Trauma, panic attacks or overwhelming emotions
Feeling "stuck" in a mood with no clear cause	Depression or any condition under clinical treatment
Preparing calmly for a challenging conversation	Situations where you feel unsafe — seek support first

> Go gently and at your own pace. This is a self-reflection exercise; if difficult memories or strong emotions come up, stop and talk to a qualified professional.

SECTION 13

Pattern · Mind-to-Muscle

Closing the "knowing–doing gap": turning a principle you understand into an automatic, embodied response.



The process

Step	Prompt
1 · Choose a principle	What do you know is true and important but don't yet do consistently?
2 · Translate into a belief	How would you say this as a personal belief, in the first person?
3 · Translate into a decision	What will you decide to do because of this belief?
4 · Translate into an action	What exactly will you do, when, where?
5 · Install in the muscle	Rehearse physically — say it aloud, gesture, practise — until it feels natural.

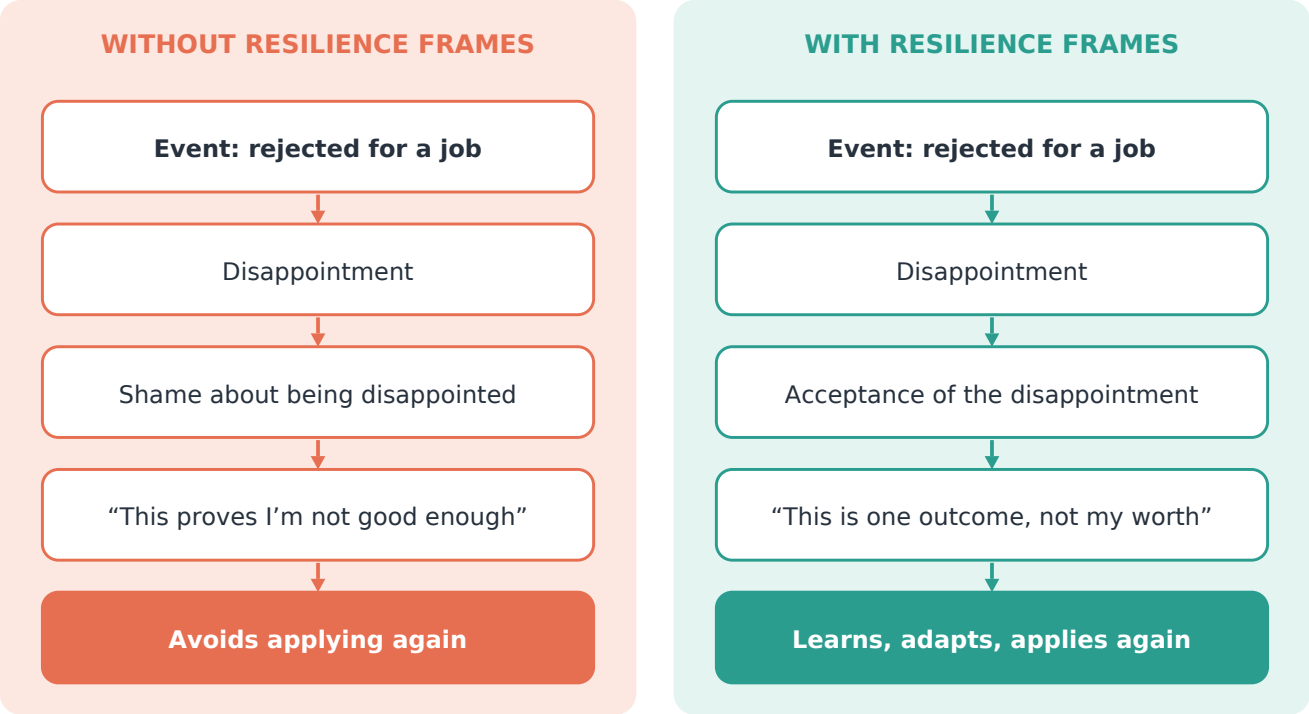
> Mind-to-Muscle moves a person **across** the Meaning–Performance Axes: from knowing to doing.

SECTION 14

Application · Building Resilience

The Meta-States model began with modelling resilience. Here is how a setback can be reframed layer by layer.

Resilient people still feel the primary emotions of a setback — disappointment, frustration, loss. What differs is the frames they bring to those emotions. Below, the same event is shown with two different meta-level stacks.



Resilience stages and helpful meta-states

Stage	What happens	Helpful meta-states
1 · Setback	Something goes wrong; primary emotions arise	Permission to feel; acceptance
2 · Coping	Managing the immediate impact	Calm; self-compassion; ownership of response
3 · Learning	Making sense of what happened	Curiosity; openness to feedback
4 · Rebuilding	Choosing the next step	Hope; decisiveness; meaning and purpose
5 · Thriving	Growing beyond the earlier level	Appreciation; confidence based on experience

SECTION 15

Applications Across Contexts

Neuro-Semantics is used wherever meanings shape performance — in coaching, leadership, learning, sales, health habits and personal growth.

Coaching

Uncover the frames behind a goal; meta-state ownership and commitment.

Leadership

Meta-state calm under pressure; align team meaning with action.

Learning

Frame mistakes with curiosity; joy about practising.

Sales & influence

Respect about rejection; genuine care for the client's needs.

Wellbeing habits

Turn health values into daily behaviour with Mind-to-Muscle.

Relationships

Acceptance and curiosity about difference; calm about conflict.

Common target states and the meta-states that transform them

Context	Problem experience	Key frame to change	Meta-state to apply
Workplace	Procrastination	"It must be perfect"	Permission to do a good-enough first draft
Leadership	Reacting angrily to bad news	"Problems are threats"	Calm curiosity about problems
Learning	Giving up after mistakes	"Mistakes mean I'm stupid"	Mistakes as feedback; joy in practice
Sales	Fear of rejection	"Rejection is personal"	Respect for the client's choice; self-worth
Health	Skipping exercise	"Exercise is punishment"	Appreciation of what my body can do
Self-esteem	Worth depends on results	"I'm only as good as my last success"	Unconditional worth as a person

Neuro-Semantics separates **self-esteem** (unconditional worth as a person) from **self-confidence** (trust in specific skills). Meta-stating unconditional worth makes it safer to fail, learn and try again.

SECTION 16

Worked Example · Fear of Public Speaking

A step-by-step illustration of meta-stating a familiar challenge — and an illustrative self-rating before and after.

STARTING POINT

“I freeze before presentations, and then I hate myself for freezing.”

Step	Coach’s question	Client’s answer / action
Awareness	What do you feel — and what do you feel about that?	Nervous (primary) · disgust at being nervous (meta)
Frame	What does the nervousness mean to you?	“Good speakers never get nervous — so I’m not one.”
Access	When have you felt calm, accepting and curious?	Teaching my niece to ride a bike
Amplify	Let that state grow — where do you feel it?	Warmth in the chest, slower breathing
Apply	Bring that calm curiosity to the nervousness.	“It’s just energy getting ready — interesting.”
Meta-Yes	Say yes to a new frame.	“Yes — nerves can fuel a lively talk.”
Accelerate	Imagine next Thursday’s presentation.	Feels the nerves; welcomes them; opens with a smile

Illustrative self-rating (0–10)



Note: nervousness drops only moderately — the big change is in the **meta-level** (self-criticism) and what follows from it.

Illustrative example scores, not research data.

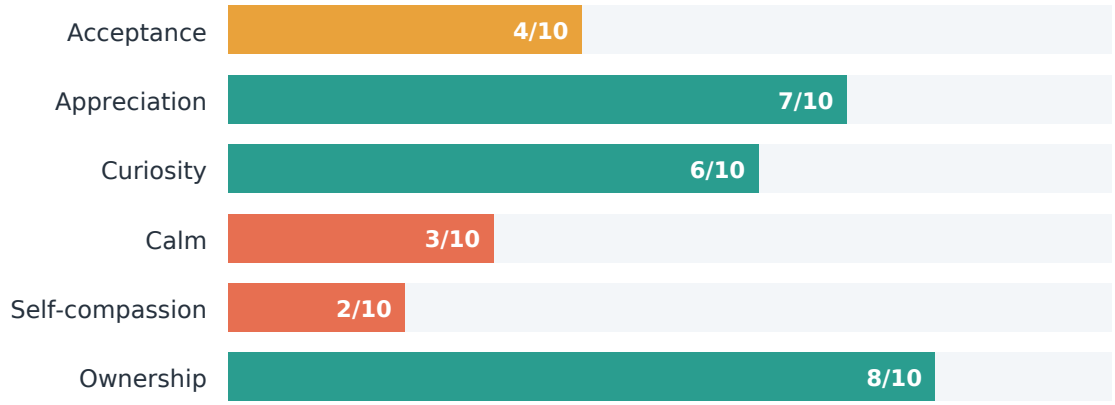
SECTION 17

A Library of Resourceful Meta-States

Useful “higher” states to bring to everyday experiences. Choose one, access it fully, and apply it to the state you want to change.

Meta-state	Apply it to…	What it tends to create	Access question
Acceptance	Painful feelings, setbacks	Less struggle; clearer thinking	What would it be like to simply allow this?
Appreciation	Ordinary tasks, other people	Gratitude; motivation; warmth	What can I value about this?
Curiosity	Mistakes, conflict, fear	Learning; openness	What’s interesting about this?
Calm	Anger, urgency, worry	Measured responses	When have I felt completely calm?
Self-compassion	Failure, shame, criticism	Recovery; resilience	How would I speak to a good friend here?
Playfulness	Learning, creativity, stress	Flexibility; experimentation	How could I make this a game?
Ownership	Complaints, blame	Proactivity; choice	What part of this is mine to act on?
Respect	Disagreement, anger	Firm but fair communication	How can I honour myself and them?
Commitment	Good intentions, habits	Follow-through	What am I willing to do, no matter what?
Unconditional worth	Performance pressure	Courage to risk and grow	What is my value as a person, apart from results?

How often each meta-state is useful — a quick self-assessment



Example profile: how easily this person can access each state (0–10). Low scores show where to practise first.

SECTION 18

Pitfalls, Tips and a Balanced View

Meta-stating is simple in principle, but a few common mistakes can make it less effective — or counter-productive.

1 Fighting the primary state

× Trying to make a feeling go away often adds a meta-state of rejection.

✓ **Fix:** Start with acceptance or permission, then add other resources.

2 Weak resource access

× Recalling calm as an idea rather than a felt state has little effect.

✓ **Fix:** Amplify until it is felt in the body before applying it.

3 Paradox loops

× "I must relax!" or "I should be confident!" create tension.

✓ **Fix:** Use invitations: "I can allow myself to relax."

4 Skipping ecology

× A new frame can clash with values or relationships.

✓ **Fix:** Ask: does any part of me object? Adjust the frame.

5 Insight without action

× Feeling better in the session, but nothing changes.

✓ **Fix:** Use Mind-to-Muscle and rehearse in context.

6 Over-reaching

× Using self-help patterns for trauma or clinical issues.

✓ **Fix:** Work with a qualified professional for these.

Where the evidence stands

Claim area	Status
Neuro-Semantics / Meta-States as a specific method	Little controlled research; mostly practitioner reports
Thinking about thinking (metacognition) affects emotion and learning	Well researched in psychology
Reappraising meaning changes emotional response	Well researched (cognitive reappraisal)
Accepting rather than fighting emotions reduces distress	Supported in acceptance-based approaches
Self-compassion supports resilience after failure	Growing research support

SECTION 19

Self-Coaching Worksheet & Key Takeaways

Use this page to meta-state one experience you would like to change.

1. The situation
When / where does it happen?

2. Primary state
What do I feel about the situation? (0–10)

3. Meta-state
What do I feel or think about that feeling?

4. Frame / belief
What does it mean about me, others, the world?

5. Resource state
What state would help? When have I felt it fully?

6. Apply
What happens when I bring it to the primary state?

7. New frame
What new belief do I say "yes" to?

8. Ecology
Does any part of me object? What adjustment helps?

9. First action
What will I do differently, and when?

Key takeaways

STATES ABOUT STATES
Our reactions to our own feelings shape our experience.

FRAMES GOVERN
Higher-level meanings set the rules for the states below.

CHOOSE THE LAYER
Bring acceptance, curiosity or calm to difficult states.

BUILD GESTALTS
Layer simple states to create courage and resilience.

EMBODY IT
Turn meaning into action, then into habit.