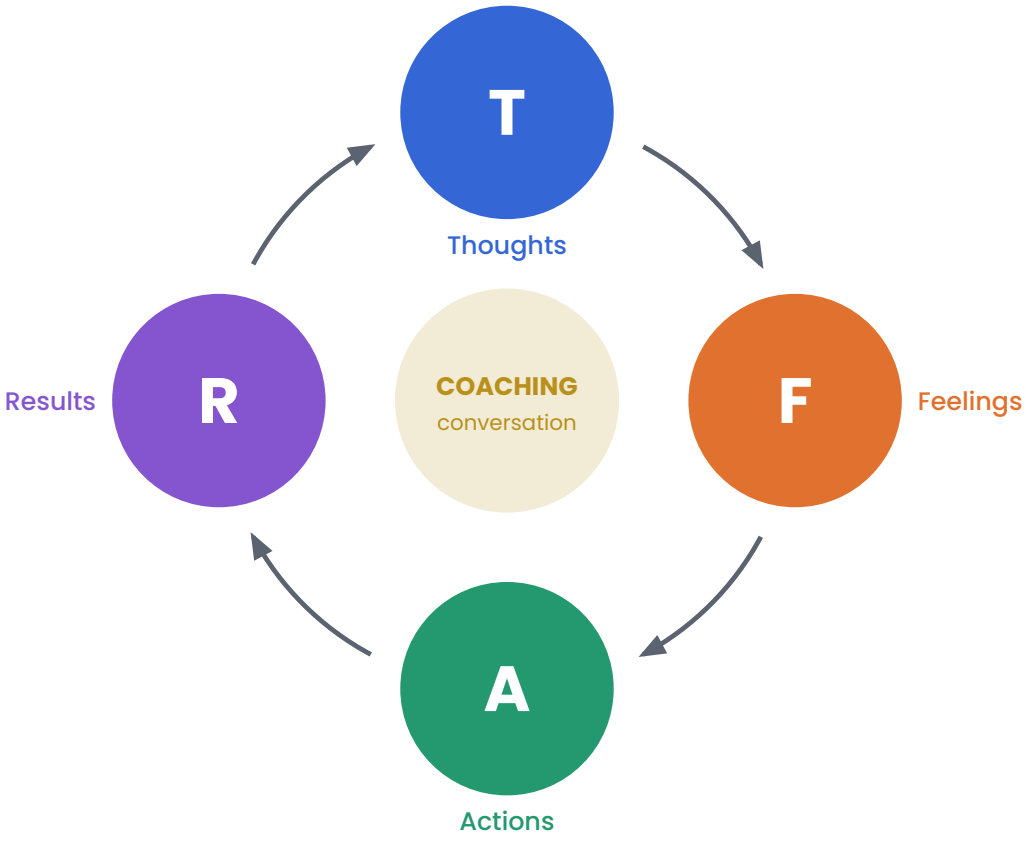


NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING · A VISUAL SUMMARY

The T-F-A-R Model

& Free-Flow Conversational Coaching

How thoughts become results — and how conversation changes them

Thoughts • Feelings • Actions • Results • Conversation

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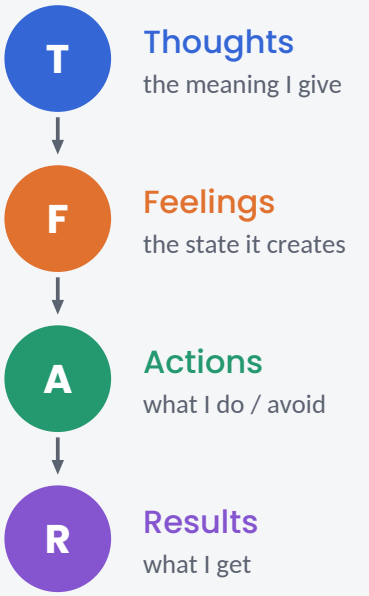
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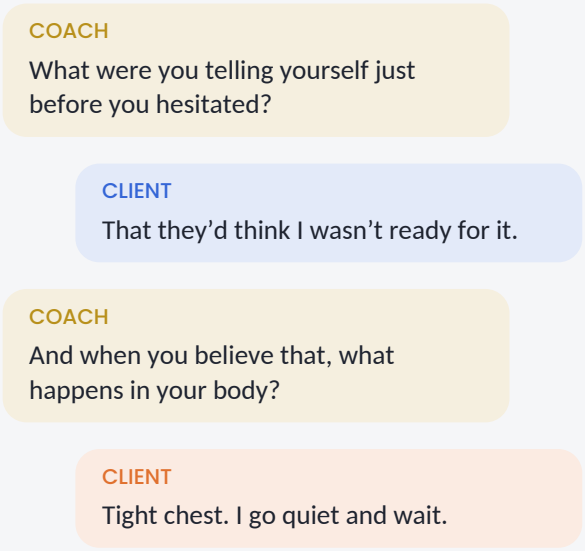
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1 The Big Picture

The T-F-A-R model maps a simple chain: what we **think** shapes how we **feel**, feelings drive what we **do**, and actions produce our **results**. Free-flow conversational coaching is a natural, unscripted way of helping someone see and change that chain.



The model: a cause-and-effect chain



The method: a natural, curious conversation

T-F-A-R gives the map

- A shared language for client and coach
- Pinpoints *where* the chain gets stuck
- Shows that results usually start upstream, in thinking
- Turns vague problems into specific links

Free-flow coaching gives the journey

- Follows the client's energy, not a script
- Uses NLP skills: rapport, calibration, precise questions
- Moves around the cycle in whatever order helps
- Ends with a clear, owned next step

> **In one line:** change the thought or the state, and new actions — and new results — become possible. The conversation is where that change is discovered.

2 Roots and Influences

The T-F-A-R chain is not unique to NLP. It draws on several traditions in psychology and coaching, which NLP trainers combined with their own language-based tools.

1950s — **Ellis' ABC model**

Albert Ellis' rational emotive therapy proposes that beliefs about an activating event, not the event itself, drive emotional consequences.

1960s — **Beck's cognitive model**

Aaron Beck links automatic thoughts to emotions and behaviour — the foundation of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

1970s — **NLP is born**

Richard Bandler and John Grinder model skilled therapists and publish the Meta Model of language (*The Structure of Magic*, 1975).

1980s–90s — **Performance coaching**

Inner-game and GROW-style coaching (popularised by John Whitmore) bring conversational, question-led methods into business.

1990s–2000s — **NLP coaching**

NLP trainers, including L. Michael Hall's Meta-Coaching, frame coaching as a conversation that works with thoughts, states and outcomes.

2010s — **'The Model' in life coaching**

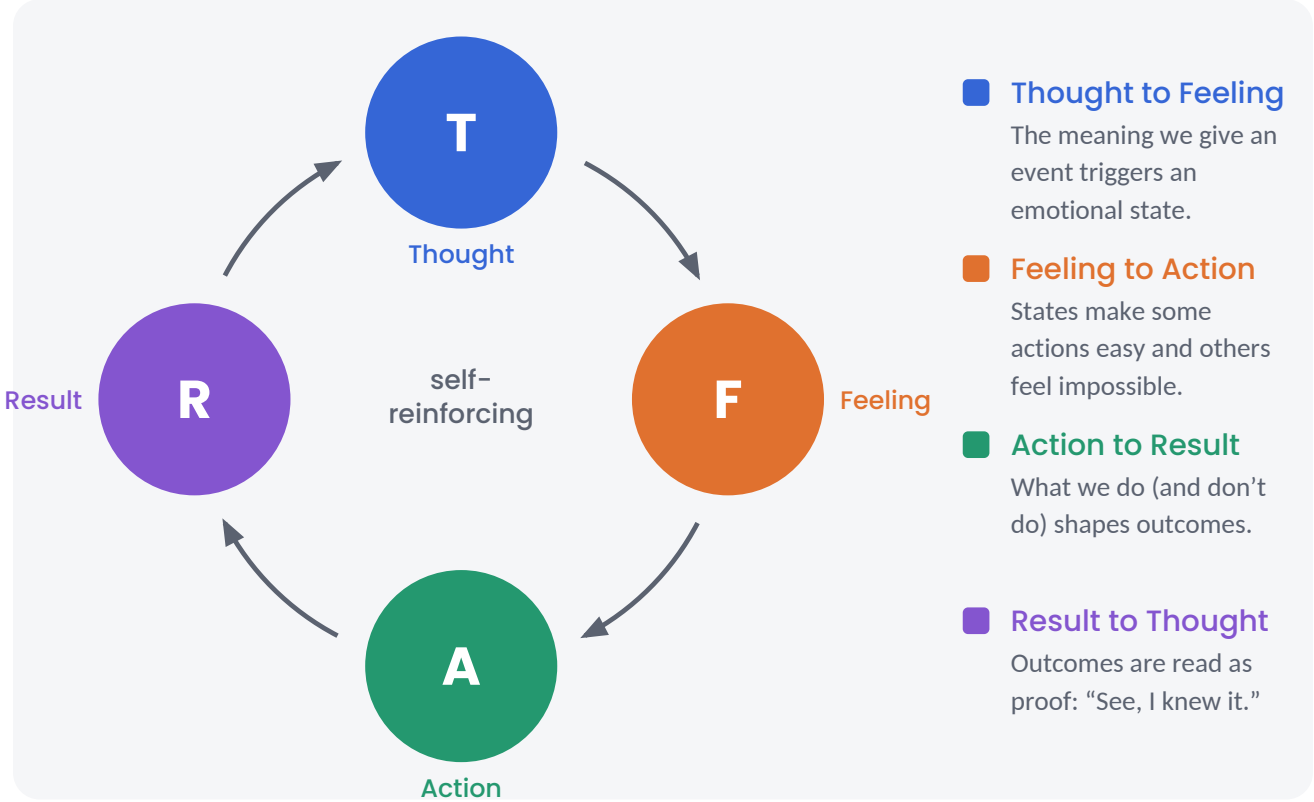
Brooke Castillo popularises a C-T-F-A-R sequence (circumstance, thought, feeling, action, result) in life coaching.

Model	Sequence	Emphasis
Ellis (REBT)	A → B → C	Activating event, Belief, Consequence
Beck (CBT)	Situation → Thought → Emotion → Behaviour	Automatic thoughts and core beliefs
T-F-A-R / C-T-F-A-R	(Circumstance) → T → F → A → R	Results as the end of the chain

Note: 'T-F-A-R' is a teaching framework used by many coaches and trainers rather than a single formally published NLP technique, so wording varies between schools.

3 The T-F-A-R Cycle

The chain is really a loop. Results become evidence that confirms the original thought, so the pattern tends to repeat — for better or for worse.



Key properties of the loop

- **Upstream leverage:** changing a thought tends to ripple through every later link.
- **Any entry point:** the loop can be interrupted anywhere — a new action or a change of state can also shift thinking.
- **Confirmation bias:** people notice results that match their thinking and filter out results that don't.
- **Ownership:** the model locates influence in what the client can change, rather than in circumstances alone.

> NLP presupposition often quoted here: **"There is no failure, only feedback."** A result is information about the loop, not a verdict on the person.

4 T — Thoughts

Thoughts are the sentences, images and meanings the mind produces about a situation. In NLP terms they are *internal representations* — the client's map, not the territory.

FORM	OFTEN SOUNDS LIKE	COACH'S AIM
Self-talk, images, beliefs, assumptions	**"I can't…", "They always…", "It means…"**	**Make thoughts visible and testable**



What it looks like

- Automatic, fast and often unnoticed
- Stated as facts rather than interpretations
- Repeated phrases or 'rules' (should, must)
- Pictures or inner voices with a particular tone

NLP lens

- Meta Model questions recover deleted, distorted or generalised detail
- Submodalities: size, distance and tone of inner images and voices
- Beliefs as generalisations that can be updated

Coaching questions for this link

Purpose	Question
Surface it	What were you saying to yourself in that moment?
Test it	How do you know that's true? Is there any evidence against it?
Find the rule	What would have to be true for that to be a problem?
Open options	What else could this mean?

> **Example:** "I'm bad at presenting" is a thought, not a fact. Asking "bad compared to what, and according to whom?" turns a fixed identity into a specific, workable skill gap.

5 F — Feelings

Feelings are the emotional and bodily states that follow from thoughts. NLP calls the overall condition a *state* — and notes that state strongly shapes which actions feel available.

FORM	OFTEN SOUNDS LIKE	COACH'S AIM
Emotions, sensations, energy level	**"I freeze", "I feel flat", "I get fired up"**	**Name the state and make it shiftable**



What it looks like

- Visible in posture, breathing, voice and colour
- Often described by location in the body
- Can be confused with thoughts ("I feel that…")
- Intensity rises and falls with focus

NLP lens

- Calibration: noticing non-verbal shifts in the client
- State management and anchoring of resourceful states
- Association vs dissociation to change intensity

Coaching questions for this link

Purpose	Question
Name it	What are you feeling right now, and where do you notice it?
Rate it	On a scale of 0–10, how strong is that?
Trace it	Which thought tends to come just before this feeling?
Choose it	What state would serve you best in that situation?

> **Example:** a client who "feels that nobody listens" is stating a thought. Asking what they actually *feel* ("hurt, then tense") separates the emotion from the interpretation.

6 A — Actions

Actions are what a person does — and does not do. Avoidance, hesitation and over-preparation are actions too, and they are often the most revealing.

FORM	OFTEN SOUNDS LIKE	COACH'S AIM
Behaviour, speech, habits, inaction	**"So I just…", "I end up…", "I never get round to…"**	**Connect behaviour to the state behind it**



What it looks like

- Habitual responses that run automatically
- Avoidance or procrastination
- Over-compensation (working late, over-explaining)
- Small actions repeated over time

NLP lens

- Behaviour as the product of a strategy (internal sequence)
- Future pacing: mentally rehearsing a new action
- Modelling people who already act effectively

Coaching questions for this link

Purpose	Question
Make it concrete	What specifically did you do next?
Find the pattern	When else do you find yourself doing that?
Expand choice	If you felt calm and confident, what would you do instead?
Commit	What is one action you will take this week, and when?

> **Example:** "I didn't speak up" is an action of withholding. Coaching explores the state that made silence the easiest option, then rehearses a small, specific alternative.

7 R — Results

Results are the outcomes produced by the chain — and the evidence that feeds back into new thoughts. In NLP, results are treated as *feedback* that shows how well the current strategy is working.

FORM	OFTEN SOUNDS LIKE	COACH'S AIM
Outcomes, consequences, measurable change	**"Nothing changes", "I keep getting..."**	**Treat results as data, not judgement**

T → F → A → R

What it looks like

- Recurring outcomes across different situations
- Results the client wants vs results they get
- Results used as 'proof' of the original thought
- Unintended side benefits (secondary gain)

NLP lens

- Well-formed outcomes: stated in the positive, within the client's control
- Ecology check: impact on the wider system
- Feedback, not failure

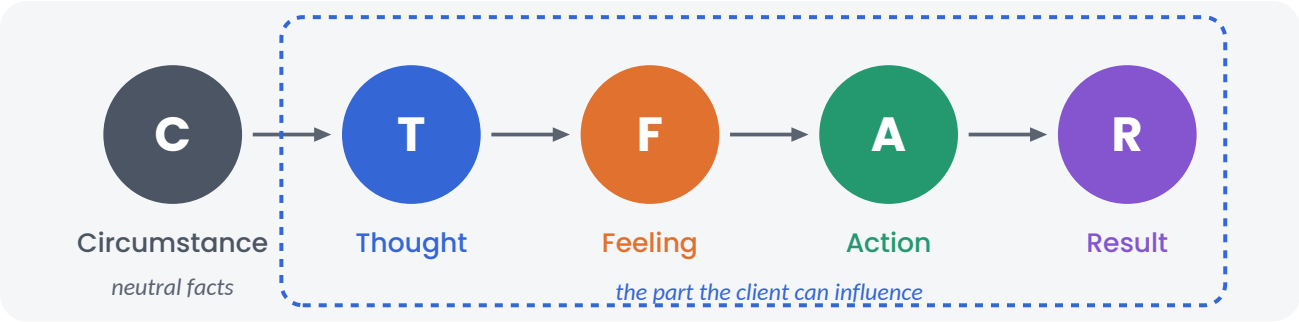
Coaching questions for this link

Purpose	Question
Clarify	What result are you getting now? What would you like instead?
Link back	How do your current actions create this result?
Ecology	What might you lose if this changed? Who else is affected?
Evidence	How will you know you've achieved it?

> **Example:** "I never get promoted" becomes a feedback loop to examine: which thoughts, states and actions are producing this outcome, and which link is easiest to change first?

8 The Starting Point: Circumstance

Many coaches add a ‘C’ before the chain: the neutral facts of the situation. Separating facts from thoughts is often the first breakthrough in a coaching conversation.



Fact or thought? A quick sort

Client says	Circumstance (fact)	Thought (interpretation)
“My boss ignored my email.”	Boss has not replied for two days.	‘Ignored’ — I don’t matter to her.
“The presentation was a disaster.”	Two people asked hard questions.	‘Disaster’ — I looked incompetent.
“My partner never helps.”	Partner did not cook this week.	‘Never’ — I’m on my own.
“I’m too old to change careers.”	I am 48.	‘Too old’ — employers won’t want me.

A circumstance is…

- Something everyone would agree on
- Could be recorded on camera
- Free of adjectives and judgements
- Usually outside the client’s direct control

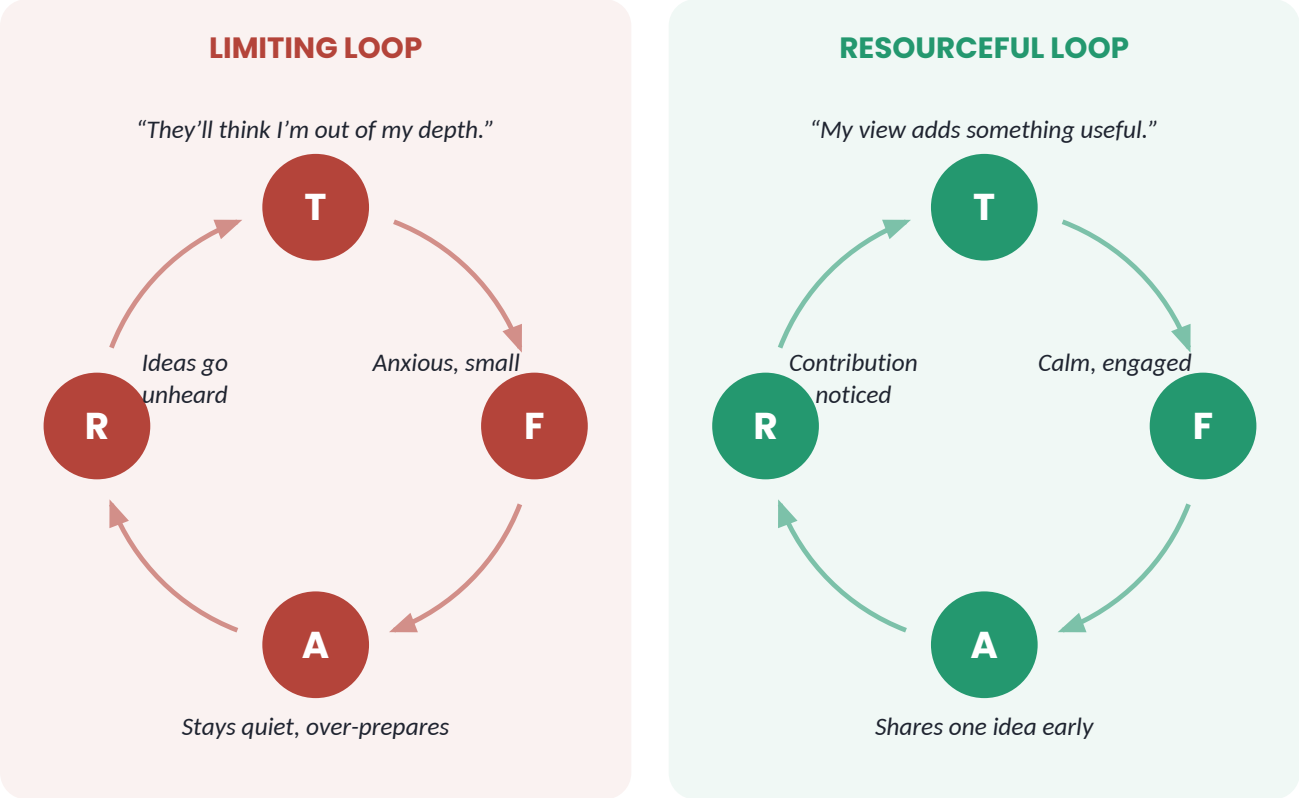
Why separate them?

- Shows the client that the event did not ‘make’ them feel
- Reveals that other thoughts were possible
- Reduces blame and defensiveness
- Points the coaching at what can change

> **Coaching move:** “If I had been filming that moment, what would the camera have recorded?” — then: “And what did you make it mean?”

9 Two Loops: Limiting and Resourceful

The same circumstance can feed very different loops. Coaching aims to help the client build a loop that is both believable and useful.



Same circumstance: a team meeting with senior colleagues

What makes a new thought 'stick'?

Quality	Why it matters	Check question
Believable	A thought the client doesn't believe won't change their feelings.	On a scale of 0–10, how true does this feel?
Useful	It should open up better actions, not just feel nice.	If you believed this, what would you do?
Owned	Generated by the client, not imposed by the coach.	How would you put that in your own words?
Ecological	It fits the client's values and wider life.	Is any part of you uneasy with this?

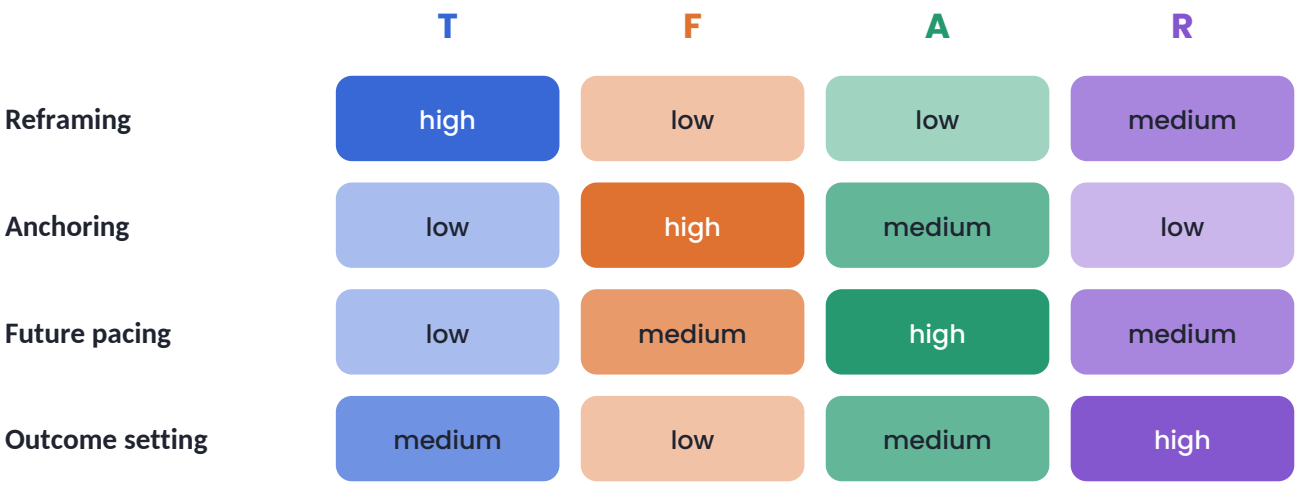
10 T-F-A-R Through an NLP Lens

Each link in the chain corresponds to familiar NLP concepts and techniques. This table helps practitioners choose the right tool for the link where the client is stuck.

Link	NLP concept	Typical techniques	Key presupposition
T · Thoughts	Internal representations; beliefs; the map	Meta Model, reframing, submodality shifts, belief change	The map is not the territory
F · Feelings	State; physiology; association	Anchoring, state elicitation, dissociation, breathing and posture	Mind and body are one system
A · Actions	Behaviour; strategies; flexibility	New behaviour generator, modelling, future pacing	The person with the most flexibility has the most influence
R · Results	Outcomes; feedback; ecology	Well-formed outcomes, ecology check, timeline work	There is no failure, only feedback

Where to intervene: an illustrative guide

Relative usefulness of each intervention type at each link — a teaching heuristic, not research data.



> A simple rule of thumb: **work upstream when you can, downstream when you must.** Sometimes a small new action (A) is the quickest way to disprove an old thought (T).

11 What Is Free-Flow Conversational Coaching?

Free-flow coaching is an unscripted, client-led conversation in which the coach uses NLP skills in the moment rather than following a fixed sequence of steps or a form.

A spectrum of coaching structure



Scripted	Structured	Semi-structured	Free-flow
technique protocols	e.g. GROW stages	model in mind	client-led

	Structured coaching	Free-flow coaching
Direction	Coach moves through set stages	Follows the client's language and energy
Questions	Prepared in advance	Built from the client's exact words
Use of models	Model drives the conversation	Model (like T-F-A-R) sits in the background as a map
Strengths	Clear, teachable, easy to evaluate	Natural, responsive, often deeper
Risks	Can feel mechanical	Can drift without a clear outcome
Best for	New coaches, defined goals	Experienced coaches, complex or emotional topics

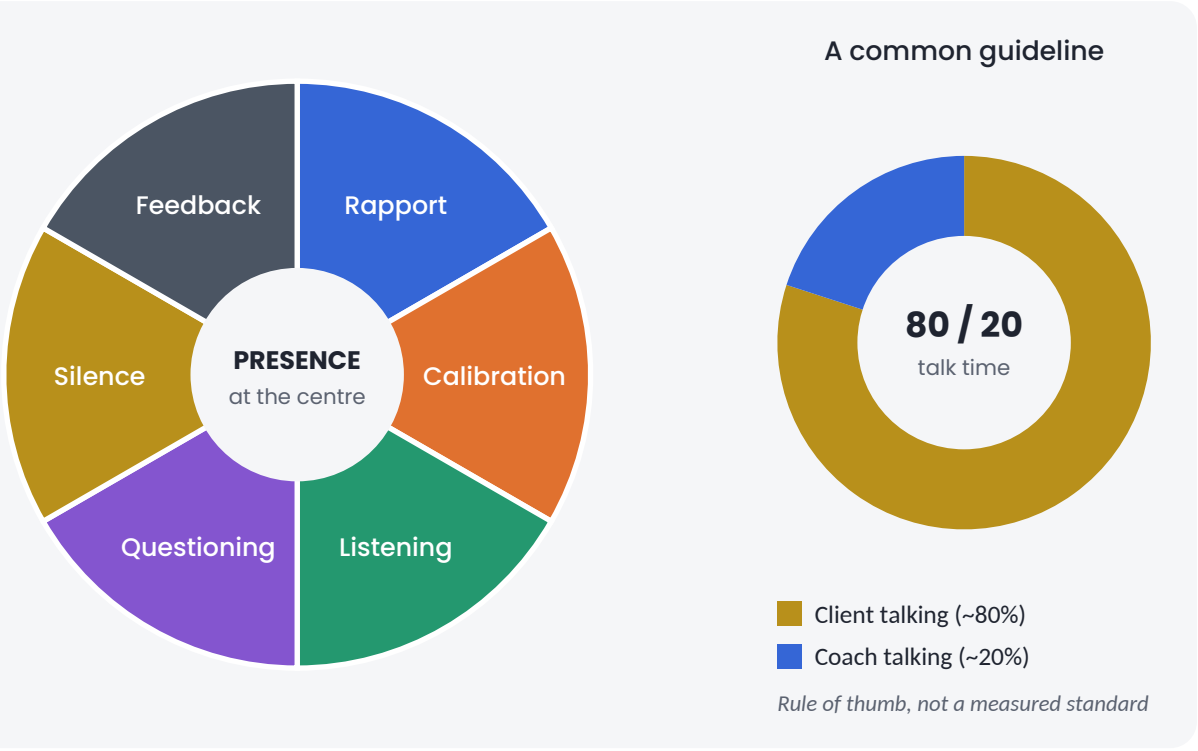
Free-flow does not mean structure-free

- The coach still holds a clear **outcome** for the session, agreed with the client at the start.
- T-F-A-R works as a **mental map**: the coach notices which link the client is talking about and where it breaks.
- The conversation is **contracted** — the client knows it is coaching, not chat.

> Think of it like jazz: the musician improvises freely, but always within a key and a rhythm the band shares.

12 Core Skills of the Free-Flow Coach

Free-flow coaching relies less on techniques and more on a handful of conversational skills practised to a high level.



Skill	What it means in practice	NLP link
Rapport	Matching pace, tone and language so the client feels met	Pacing and leading
Calibration	Noticing shifts in breathing, posture, colour and voice	Sensory acuity
Listening	Hearing the exact words, especially repeated ones	Backtracking, predicates
Questioning	Short, open, precise questions built from client language	Meta Model, clean questions
Silence	Allowing space for the client to process	Internal search time
Feedback	Reflecting what the coach notices, without judgement	Feedback, not failure

13 A Question Bank Organised by T-F-A-R

In free-flow coaching the coach doesn't read questions from a list — but having them organised by link makes it easy to reach for the right one in the moment.

THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	ACTIONS	RESULTS
What are you telling yourself?	What do you notice in your body?	What did you actually do?	What result are you getting now?
What does that mean to you?	How strong is that, 0–10?	What did you avoid doing?	What do you want instead?
How do you know?	When did you first feel this way?	What would you do if you weren't afraid?	How will you know you've got it?
What would someone you admire think here?	What would you rather feel?	What's the smallest next step?	Who else is affected?
What else could be true?	When have you felt that before?	What might get in the way?	What did this result teach you?

Qualities of a powerful free-flow question

Short
Fewer than about 12 words

Open
Begins with what, how, where, when

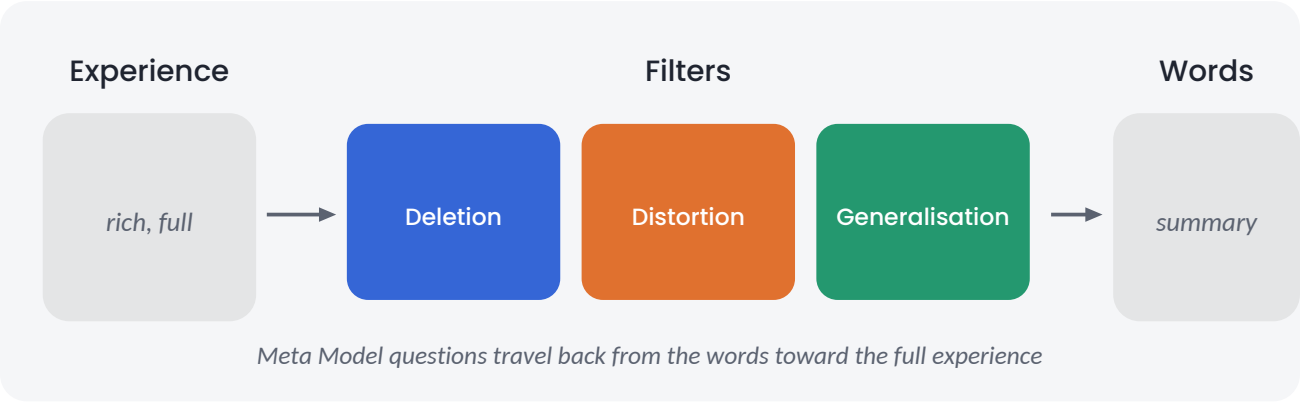
Client-owned
Uses the client's own words

Forward-moving
Points toward choice and action

> **Use 'why' sparingly.** "Why did you do that?" often invites justification. "What led to that?" or "What was important about that?" usually gets richer, less defensive answers.

14 The Meta Model in Free-Flow Conversation

The Meta Model is NLP's toolkit of precision questions. It helps the coach recover the detail behind the client's thoughts — exactly the 'T' link of the chain.



Meta Model questions travel back from the words toward the full experience

Pattern	Client says	Coach asks
Unspecified noun (deletion)	"People don't respect me."	Which people, specifically?
Comparative deletion	"I need to be better."	Better than what, or than whom?
Mind reading (distortion)	"She thinks I'm lazy."	How do you know what she thinks?
Cause–effect (distortion)	"He makes me angry."	How does what he does lead you to choose anger?
Nominalisation (distortion)	"Our communication is broken."	How would you like to be communicating?
Universal quantifier (generalisation)	"I always mess up."	Always? Has there ever been a time you didn't?
Modal operator (generalisation)	"I can't say no."	What would happen if you did?

> **In free-flow use**, Meta Model questions are softened and spaced out. Firing them one after another can feel like an interrogation; one well-timed question often does more than five.

15 Shifting the Loop: Reframing and State

Two of the most common ways a free-flow coach changes the T-F-A-R chain are reframing (changing meaning, at T) and state change (changing physiology and focus, at F).

Reframing changes the THOUGHT	**State change** changes the FEELING
Context reframe "Where would this behaviour be useful?"	**Physiology** Shift posture, breathing, movement
Content reframe "What else could this mean?"	**Focus** Recall a time you felt resourceful
Positive intention "What is this pattern trying to do for you?"	**Anchoring** Link a resourceful state to a cue

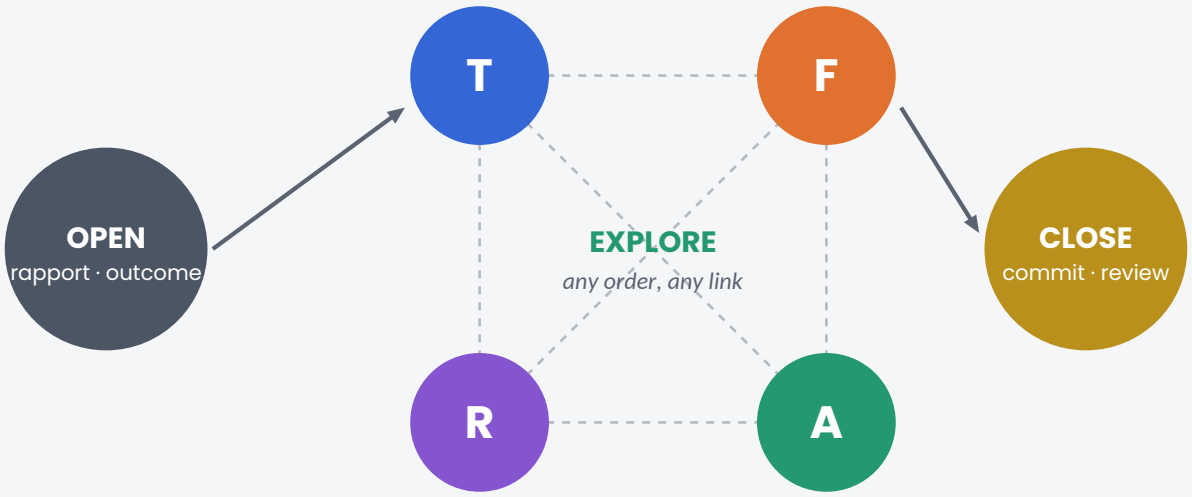
Reframing examples

Client's frame	Possible reframe	Effect on the chain
"I'm too sensitive."	"You notice what others miss."	T shifts from flaw to strength; F softens
"I failed the interview."	"You found out what they're looking for."	R becomes feedback; A: prepare differently
"I'm so stubborn."	"You don't give up on what matters."	Opens choice about where to apply it
"I procrastinate."	"Part of you wants it done well."	Explores positive intention behind A

> A reframe only works if the client recognises it as true for them. In free-flow coaching it is often better to *invite* the reframe ("What else could this mean?") than to supply it.

16 The Shape of a Free-Flow Session

Although the middle of the conversation moves freely, most free-flow sessions share a recognisable beginning and end. The T-F-A-R map guides the exploration in between.



Free-flow middle: the coach follows the client around the loop

1. Open — Build rapport, agree what the client wants from this conversation and how they'll know it was useful.

2. Explore — Follow the client's story. Notice which T-F-A-R links appear and where the chain breaks down.

3. Shift — Use questions, reframes or state work at the link with most leverage. Calibrate the response.

4. Design — Build a new loop: a believable thought, a resourceful state, a specific action.

5. Close — Agree concrete next steps, check ecology, and summarise in the client's words.

17 Worked Example: An Annotated Conversation

An excerpt from a fictional free-flow session. Sam, a team lead, wants to delegate more but keeps doing everything herself. Margin tags show which T-F-A-R link each moment touches.

COACH	What would you like to be different by the end of our conversation?	OPEN
SAM	*I want to stop working until 9 pm. I just can't hand things off.*	R / A
COACH	"Can't hand things off." What happens just before you decide to do it yourself?	T
SAM	*I think, 'It'll be quicker if I do it — and it has to be right.'*	T
COACH	And when you think 'it has to be right', what do you notice?	F
SAM	*A kind of tightness. Like I'm holding my breath.*	F
COACH	What does that tightness want for you?	SHIFT
SAM	*...To protect the team's reputation. And me.*	T
COACH	What else could protect the team's reputation, other than you doing everything?	T
SAM	*Training Priya properly. She's capable — I've just never given her the chance.*	A
COACH	What's one task you could hand to Priya this week?	CLOSE
SAM	*The weekly report. I'll walk her through it on Thursday.*	A / R

	Before	After
T	"It has to be right, so I must do it."	"Training Priya protects quality too."
F	Tight, holding breath	Relieved, purposeful
A	Does everything herself	Hands over the weekly report
R	Working until 9 pm	Time freed; Priya develops

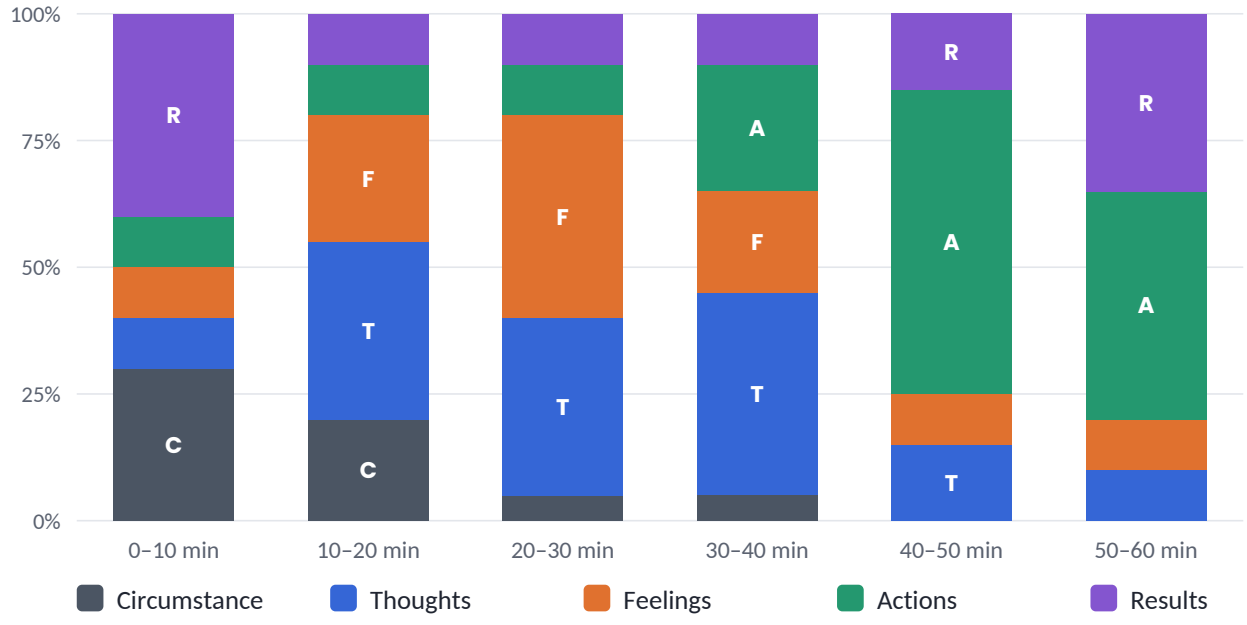
18 Reading the Client: Where Is the Chain Stuck?

Listening for which link dominates the client's language helps the free-flow coach decide where to go next.

If the client mostly talks about…	They may be stuck at…	Try…
Opinions, 'shoulds', what things mean	T · Thoughts	Meta Model questions, 'What else could it mean?'
Emotion, overwhelm, body sensations	F · Feelings	Slowing down, naming and rating the state, resource recall
Plans that never happen, 'I know what to do but…'	A · Actions	Smallest next step, rehearsal, obstacles
Outcomes, others' reactions, frustration	R · Results	Clarify the desired outcome, then trace back up the chain
Other people and circumstances	C · Circumstance	Separate facts from interpretation; bring focus back to choice

Illustrative session profile: share of conversation by link

A hypothetical 60-minute session, showing how attention might move around the loop. Not measured data.



> Typical pattern: sessions often start in **Results and Circumstance** (the problem as experienced), move upstream into **Thoughts and Feelings**, then finish downstream in **Actions** — the client's next step.

19 Pitfalls, Ethics and Boundaries

Free-flow coaching is powerful because it is responsive — which also makes it easier to drift or overstep. These guidelines keep the conversation safe and useful.

✗ PITFALL	✓ GOOD PRACTICE
Chatting instead of coaching	Agree an outcome at the start and check progress against it.
Telling the client what to think	Ask questions that let the client find the new thought.
Arguing with a thought	Get curious about it; test it together.
Forcing positive thinking	Aim for believable and useful, not merely upbeat.
Ignoring feelings to rush to action	Let the state shift first; actions follow more easily.
Ending without a next step	Close with a specific, owned commitment.
Working beyond your competence	Refer on when therapy or medical support is needed.

Coaching vs therapy

Coaching usually focuses on functioning clients and future goals. Signs of depression, trauma, self-harm or severe anxiety call for referral to a qualified mental health professional.

A note on evidence

The thought–feeling–behaviour link is well supported by research on cognitive therapies. Many specific NLP techniques have limited rigorous evidence, so claims of rapid or guaranteed change should be treated with caution.

20 Quick Reference and T-F-A-R Worksheet

A one-page summary for practice, plus a worksheet clients or coaches can use to map a loop.

T
Thoughts
What am I telling myself?

F
Feelings
What do I feel, and where?

A
Actions
What do I do or avoid?

R
Results
What do I get?

Worksheet: map your loop

	Current loop	New loop
C · Circumstance (facts only)		
T · Thought		
F · Feeling		
A · Action		
R · Result		

Five free-flow habits

Outcome first | Use their words | Calibrate | Pause | Close with action

Key takeaway: the T-F-A-R model shows *where* change is possible; free-flow coaching is *how* the client discovers it — through curious, precise conversation that ends in action.