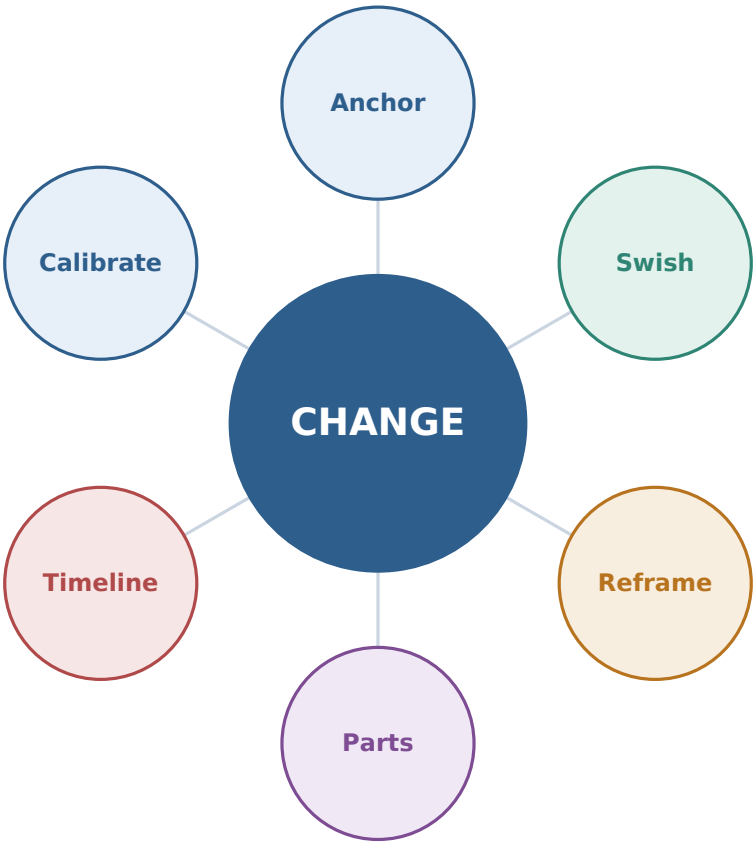


Core NLP Techniques and Interventions

A visual summary of the key change patterns in Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Rapport · Calibration · Anchoring · Submodalities · Phobia · Reframing · Parts · Timelines · Language

November 2026

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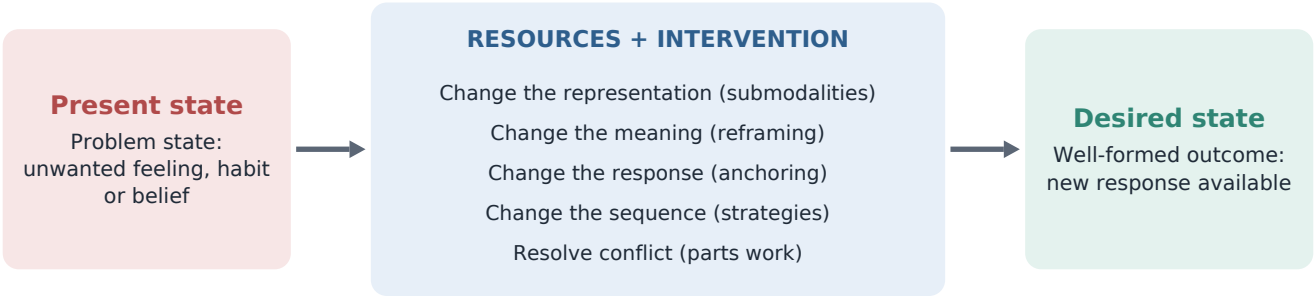
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1 · HOW NLP INTERVENTIONS WORK

The basic change model

Most NLP interventions follow the same logic. Identify the **present state**, define a well-formed **desired state**, then apply a technique that gives access to **resources** needed to move between them. Techniques differ mainly in *which* aspect of experience they change.



Ecology check: is the change good for the whole person and their relationships?

Aspect of experience	What changes	Example techniques
Internal images & sounds	How the experience is represented	Swish, submodality belief change, Fast Phobia Cure
Meaning	What the experience is taken to mean	Reframing, sleight of mouth
Stimulus–response links	Which state is triggered by a cue	Anchoring, collapsing anchors, chaining
Internal conflict	How competing intentions relate	Six-step reframing, parts integration, core transformation
Relationship to time	How past and future are coded	Timeline Therapy, change personal history, reimprinting
Sequence of thinking	The order of steps in a strategy	Strategy elicitation and installation

KEY POINT

NLP techniques are best understood as **structured procedures for changing the structure of experience**. Choosing the right one depends on what is maintaining the problem.

1 · HOW NLP INTERVENTIONS WORK

Well-formed outcomes

Before any technique, NLP practitioners define the goal precisely. A well-formed outcome is the target the intervention aims at and the measure of whether it worked.

Stated in the positive
What do you want, rather than what you don't want?

Self-initiated & maintained
Is it within your control to start and sustain?

Sensory-based evidence
What will you see, hear and feel when you have it?

Appropriately contextualised
Where, when and with whom do you want it?

Preserves positive by-products
What does the current behaviour give you that you want to keep?

Ecological
How will it affect your health, work, family and other goals?

Outcome question	Poorly formed answer	Well-formed answer
What do you want?	“To stop being nervous.”	“To feel calm and focused when presenting.”
How will you know?	“I'll just feel better.”	“My breathing is slow; I hear my voice steady.”
Where and when?	“Always.”	“In weekly team meetings and client pitches.”
What resources do you need?	“Confidence.”	“The calm I feel when teaching my nephew.”
What will you gain or lose?	(not asked)	“I may get more visible projects — and that's OK.”

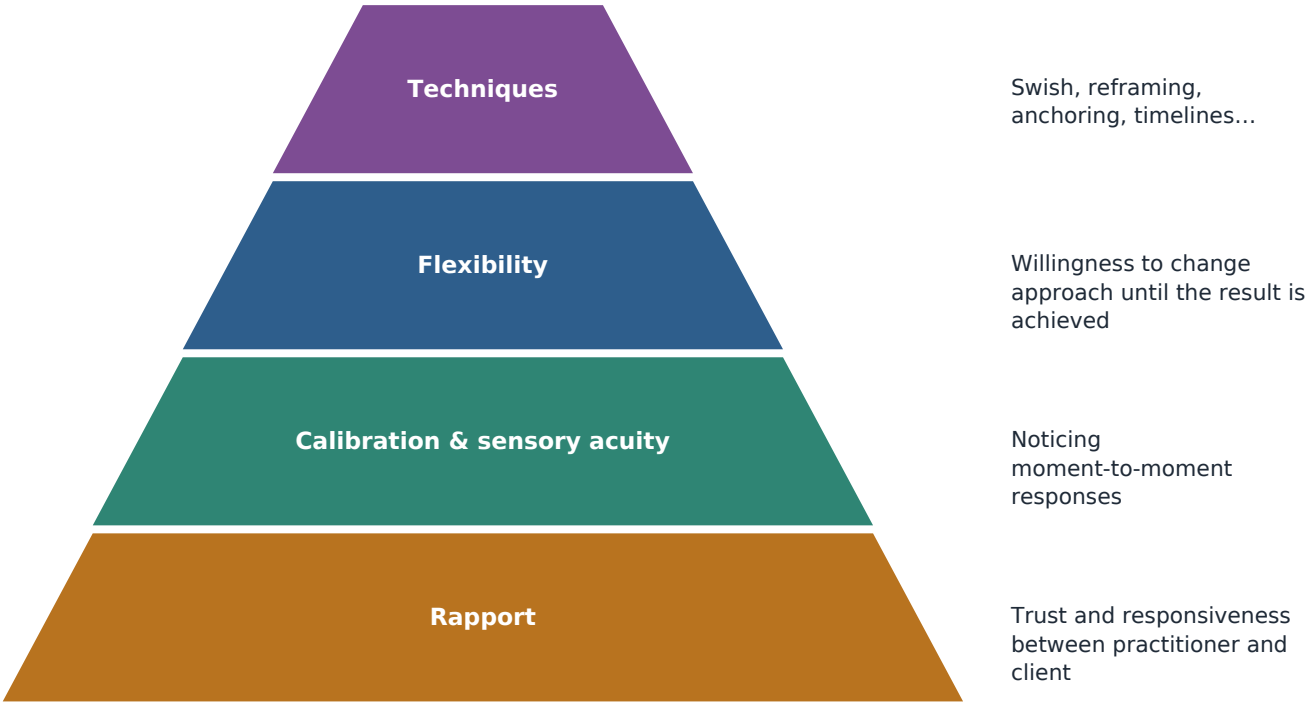
KEY POINT

The outcome frame also gives the **test** for every technique that follows: after the intervention, does the client's response in the context match the sensory evidence they defined?

1 · HOW NLP INTERVENTIONS WORK

The foundation skills behind every technique

NLP trainers often stress that techniques sit on top of more basic skills. Without rapport, calibration and flexibility, a technique becomes a script read *at* someone rather than a process done *with* them.



Skill	Why techniques depend on it	Sign it's missing
Rapport	Clients follow imaginative instructions only when they feel safe	Client resists, intellectualises or goes through the motions
Calibration	Tells you whether a step produced the intended state	Practitioner proceeds although the client is not in the state
Flexibility	Each person codes experience differently	Technique 'failed' and no alternative was tried
Outcome focus	Gives direction and a test	Session drifts; no measurable change

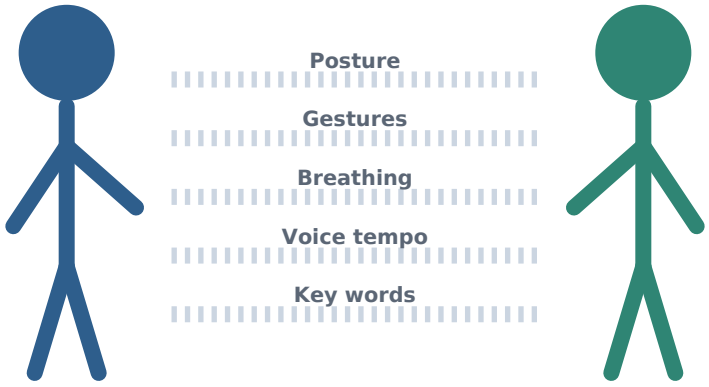
KEY POINT

A useful rule of thumb from NLP training: **state before strategy**. Get the client into a resourceful, responsive state before running any procedure.

2 · RAPPORT & CALIBRATION

Rapport: matching and mirroring

Rapport is a state of trust and mutual responsiveness. NLP teaches that rapport can be built deliberately by **matching** aspects of another person's behaviour — subtly and respectfully, never as mimicry.



Channel	What to match	Subtle form (cross-over matching)
Body	Posture, orientation, gesture size	Match their lean with a smaller lean
Breathing	Rate and depth	Pace your speech to their breathing rhythm
Voice	Tempo, volume, pitch, rhythm	Tap or nod at their speaking tempo
Language	Key words, predicates, metaphors	Reuse their exact phrases when summarising
Values	What they say is important	Frame suggestions in terms of their criteria

Mirroring vs. matching

Mirroring copies as if in a mirror (their right hand, your left). **Matching** copies the same side. Both are used in training; in practice the aim is a natural similarity in rhythm and energy rather than exact copying.

> EVIDENCE NOTE
> Research in social psychology supports a link between behavioural mimicry and liking (the 'chameleon effect'), though deliberate, obvious mimicry can backfire. Keep it subtle.

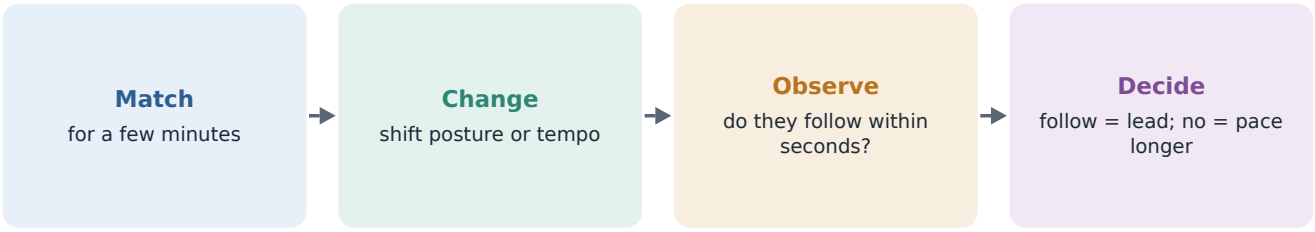
2 · RAPPORT & CALIBRATION

Pacing and leading

Once rapport is present, the practitioner can begin to **lead**: change their own posture, tempo or state and observe whether the client follows. Pacing then leading is the engine of most NLP interventions and of Ericksonian hypnotic language.



The rapport test



Situation	Pace	Lead
Upset client	Match energy slightly below theirs; acknowledge feelings	Gradually slow your voice and breathing
Sceptical client	Acknowledge doubts as reasonable	Invite a small experiment rather than belief
Stuck in detail	Follow their detail level briefly	Chunk up: "What would all that give you?"
Low energy	Match the quiet tone initially	Introduce more animation step by step

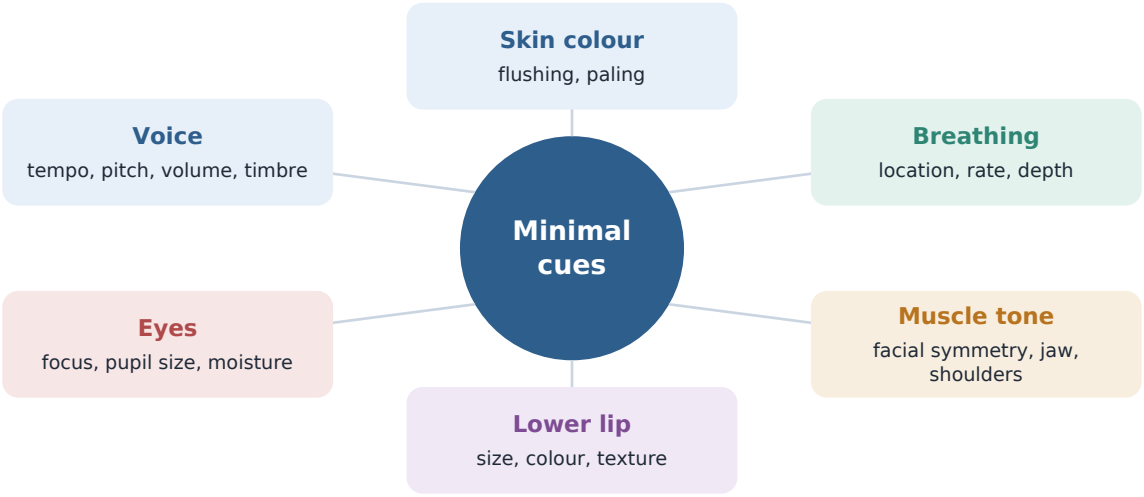
KEY POINT

If the client doesn't follow the lead, there is no failure — just a signal to **pace more** before leading again.

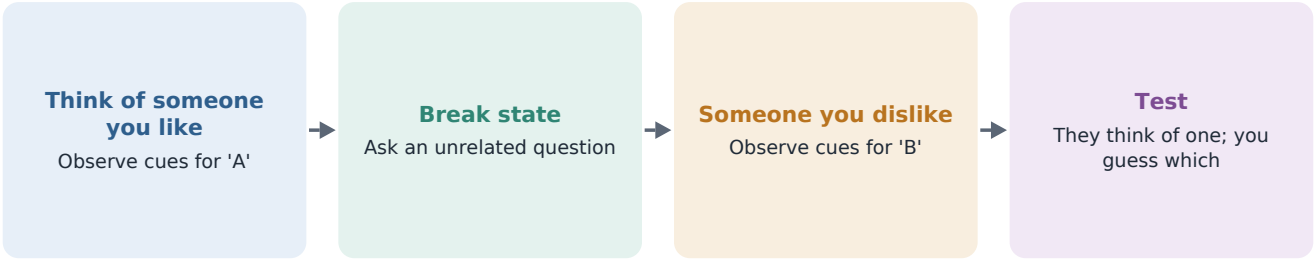
2 · RAPPORT & CALIBRATION

Calibration

Calibration is learning to read a **specific person's** non-verbal responses by linking observable cues to the states they report. It turns vague impressions into precise feedback during an intervention.



A simple calibration exercise



Calibration use	What you check
Before a technique	Baseline cues of the problem state (to compare later)
During elicitation	Is the client actually in the resource state, or just talking about it?
Anchoring	Is the state near its peak when the anchor is set?
After a technique	Do the old cues appear when the client thinks of the trigger?
Ecology	Any incongruence (hesitation, asymmetry) when agreeing to change

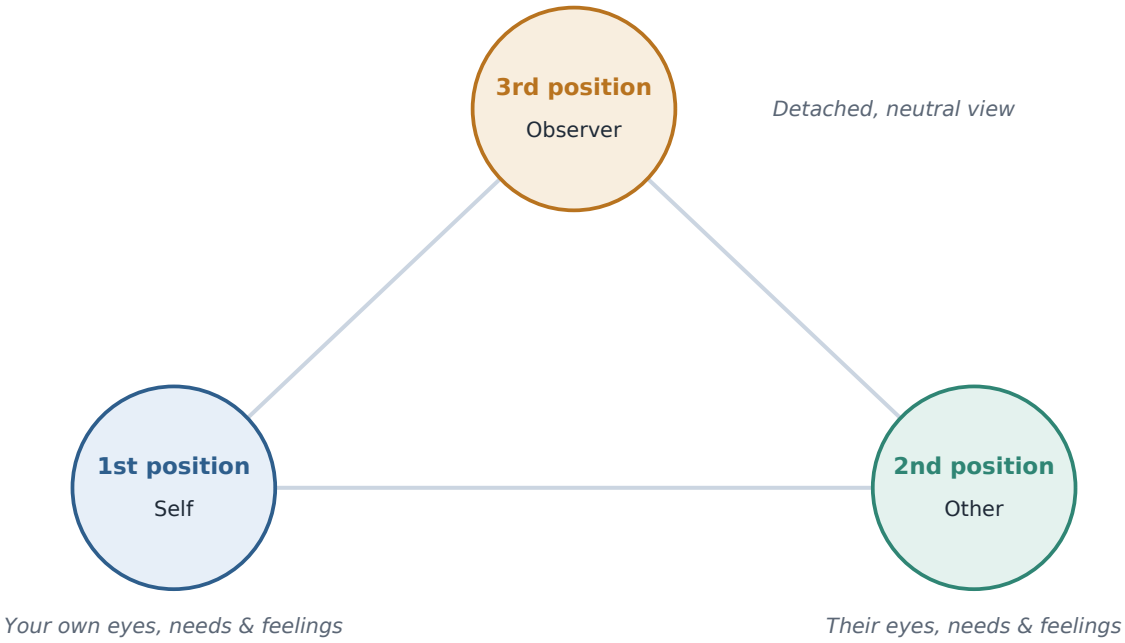
KEY POINT

Calibrate to the **individual**, not to a universal code. A frown means confusion for one person and concentration for another.

2 · RAPPORT & CALIBRATION

Perceptual positions and the meta-mirror

Perceptual positions let a person step into different viewpoints on a relationship or conflict. Robert Dilts' **meta-mirror** uses them as a structured intervention for difficult relationships.



Meta-mirror: steps

Step	Instruction
1. First position	Imagine the difficult person in front of you. How do you see, hear and feel them?
2. Second position	Step into their place. Look back at 'you'. What do they see, need and feel?
3. Third position	Step out to an observer spot. Watch both people. What do you notice about the interaction?
4. Fourth position	From further back, notice how 'you' in third position reacts to 'you' in first; switch the responses if useful
5. Return to first	Step back into first position with the new perspective. What is different now?

KEY POINT

Many interpersonal 'stuck states' come from being locked in one position: always first (self-centred), always second (people-pleasing) or always third (detached). Flexibility across positions is the resource.

3 · ANCHORING

Anchoring: the basics

An **anchor** is a stimulus that becomes linked to a state, so that later the stimulus brings back the state. It is NLP's version of a conditioned association. Anchors can be touch, a gesture, a word, a tone of voice or an image.

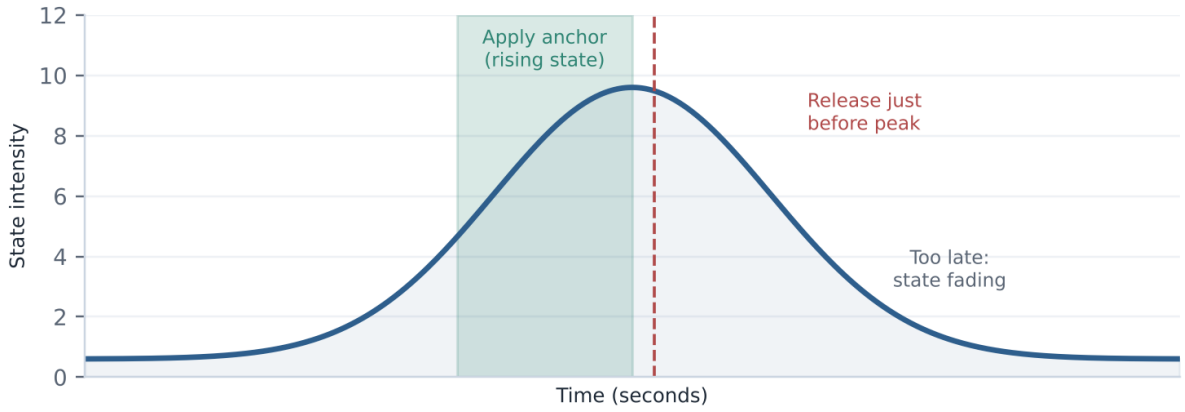


Figure: timing an anchor — apply as the state rises, release just before the peak (conceptual).

The five keys of anchoring

Intensity
Elicit a strong, fully associated state

Timing
Apply as the state approaches its peak

Uniqueness
Use a stimulus not used in everyday life

Replication
Fire it exactly as set: same place, pressure

Repetition
Stack several instances to strengthen it

Anchoring step	What the practitioner does
1. Elicit	“Remember a time you felt completely confident. Go back there… see what you saw…”
2. Calibrate	Watch breathing, posture and colour as the state builds
3. Anchor	Apply a unique touch or gesture as the state rises
4. Break state	Distract: “What did you have for breakfast?”
5. Test	Fire the anchor; check the cues of the state return

3 · ANCHORING

Resource anchors and the Circle of Excellence

Resource anchoring makes a useful state available on demand. The **Circle of Excellence**, popularised in John Grinder and Judith DeLozier's New Code work, uses a spatial anchor: an imagined circle the person steps into.



Imagined circle on the floor

1. Step in when the state peaks
2. Step out to break state
3. Repeat to stack the state
4. Future pace: imagine the circle at the next challenge

Useful resource states	Typical contexts
Calm, centred	Exams, interviews, medical appointments
Confident, grounded	Presentations, negotiations, sport
Curious, playful	Creative work, learning new skills
Focused, energised	Deep work, training sessions
Compassionate, patient	Parenting, caring roles, conflict

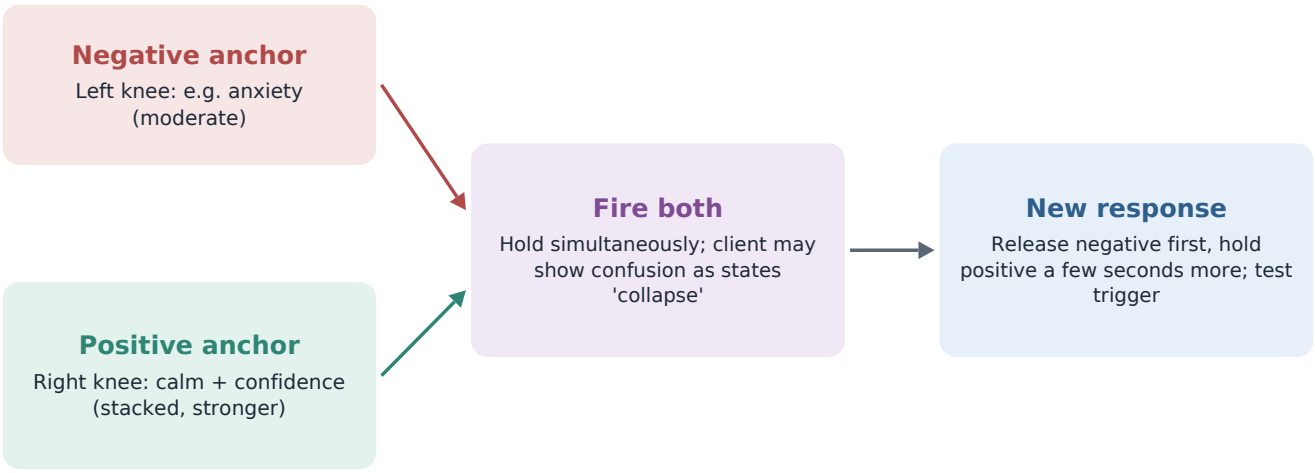
Self-anchoring tips

- Use more than one memory of the state and stack them on the same anchor.
- Choose an anchor you can fire discreetly (e.g. pressing thumb and finger together).
- Practise firing it in low-stakes situations before relying on it under pressure.

3 · ANCHORING

Collapsing anchors

Collapsing anchors integrates a problem state with a stronger resource state. When two incompatible states are triggered at once, the person cannot fully experience both, and a new, more balanced response tends to emerge.



Step	Detail	Practitioner check
1. Set positive anchor	Elicit and stack several resource states on one spot	Positive must be clearly stronger
2. Break state	Neutral question	Cues return to baseline
3. Set negative anchor	Briefly elicit the problem state at a different spot	Do not intensify it more than needed
4. Break state	Neutral question	—
5. Fire both	Hold both anchors together	Watch cues shift: confusion, then integration
6. Release	Release negative first; hold positive 5–10 s	Client's face settles into resource cues
7. Test & future pace	Fire the old negative anchor; imagine the trigger	Old response absent or much reduced

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the problem state wins, the positive anchor was not strong enough. Add more resource states and repeat.

3 · ANCHORING

Chaining anchors

When the gap between a problem state and the desired state is too large to jump in one step, anchors can be **chained**: each state leads naturally into the next, like stepping stones.

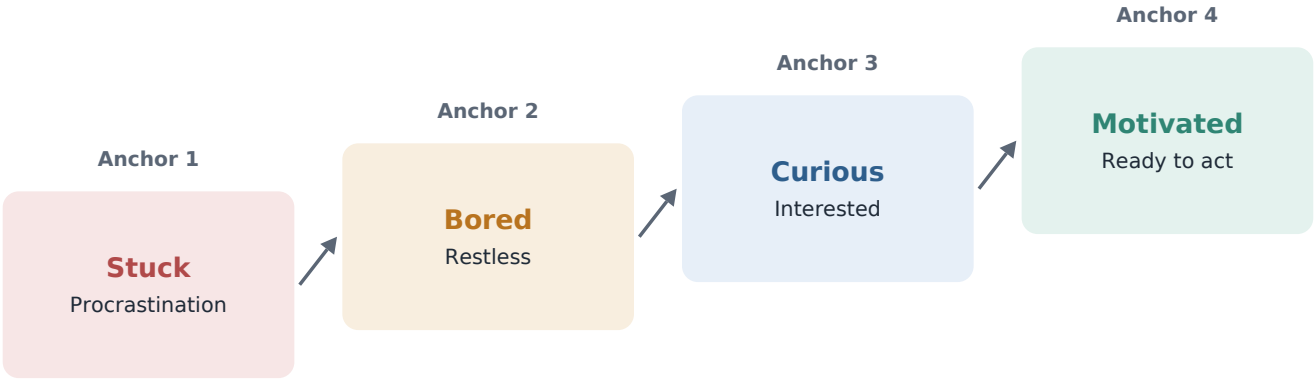


Figure: an example chain from procrastination to motivation.

Step	How it's done
Design the chain	Choose 3–5 states, each a small, believable step from the previous one
Anchor each state	Set each on its own spot (e.g. four knuckles), testing each separately
Link the chain	Fire anchor 1; as state 1 peaks, fire anchor 2 and release 1; continue to the end
Repeat	Run the chain several times so the sequence becomes automatic
Test	Think of the original trigger; notice the person moves through to the final state

Other anchoring variations

Variation	Purpose
Spatial anchoring	Presenters use locations on stage for specific states or topics
Auditory anchoring	A tone of voice or phrase linked to calm or attention
Sliding anchor	Slide a touch along the arm to intensify a state gradually

4 · SUBMODALITY TECHNIQUES

Submodalities and mapping across

Submodalities are the fine qualities of internal images, sounds and feelings: size, brightness, distance, volume, location. NLP proposes that changing these qualities changes the **intensity and meaning** of an experience.

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Colour / black & white	Volume	Location in body
Bright / dim	Pitch, tone	Temperature
Near / far	Tempo	Pressure, weight
Large / small	Location of sound	Intensity
Associated / dissociated	Whose voice	Movement, direction
Moving / still	Mono / stereo	Texture

Mapping across: contrastive analysis



Only the differences that make a difference (the 'drivers') need to change

KEY POINT

Some submodalities act as **drivers**: changing one (often size, distance or association) shifts many others and the felt intensity. Practitioners test each one to find the drivers for that person.

4 · SUBMODALITY TECHNIQUES

The Swish Pattern

The Swish, described by Richard Bandler in *Using Your Brain — For a Change* (1985), redirects the brain from an unwanted response toward a compelling image of the self who no longer needs it. It is commonly used for habits (nail biting, snacking, smoking cues) and unwanted emotional reactions.

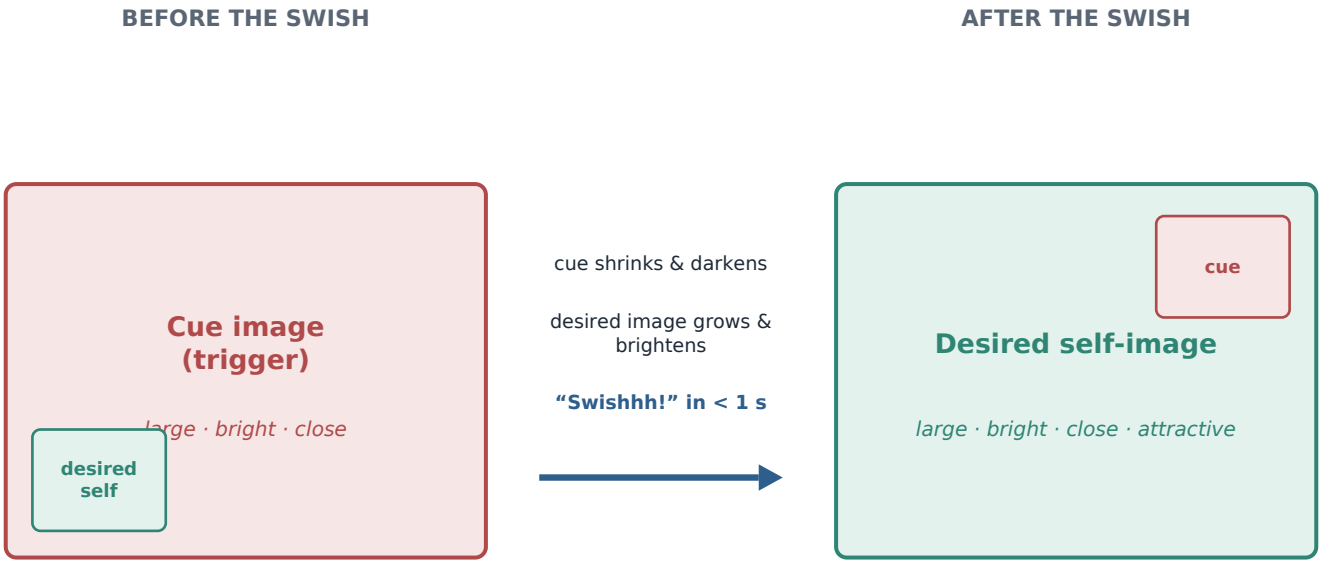


Figure: the visual swish — the cue image is replaced by the desired self-image in a rapid sweep.

Element	Description	Why it matters
Cue image	What you see just before the unwanted behaviour starts (e.g. hand moving to mouth)	The trigger is redirected, not the behaviour suppressed
Desired self-image	You (seen dissociated) as someone for whom this is no longer a problem	Attracts toward an identity, not a single action
Driver submodalities	Usually size and brightness; sometimes distance	Provide the 'pull' of the change
Speed & repetition	Fast swish, blank screen, repeat ~5 times	Builds an automatic direction: cue → desired self

KEY POINT

The desired image should be **dissociated** (seeing yourself) so it remains motivating and attractive, rather than associated, which can make the brain feel the goal is already achieved.

4 · SUBMODALITY TECHNIQUES

Running the Swish: steps and variations

A typical Swish takes 10–20 minutes. Calibration between repetitions shows whether the cue still triggers the old response.

1	**Identify the context**	Where and when does the unwanted behaviour or feeling happen?
2	**Find the cue image**	What exactly do you see just before it starts? Make it associated, big and bright.
3	**Build the desired self**	Picture the 'you' who has the choices you want. Adjust until it's highly attractive.
4	**Check ecology**	Any part of you object to becoming this you? Adjust the image if needed.
5	**Set up**	Cue image big; desired image small and dark in a corner of it.
6	**Swish**	Fast: cue shrinks and darkens as desired image grows and brightens.
7	**Clear & repeat**	Blank screen or look away. Repeat about five times, faster each time.
8	**Test**	Think of the cue now. What happens? Future pace to real situations.

Variation	How it differs	Suited to
Distance swish	Cue moves far away while desired image approaches	People for whom distance is the driver
Auditory swish	An internal voice fades as a new one gets louder	Critical self-talk
Kinesthetic swish	Feeling of the old response moves out as a new feeling moves in	Strongly feeling-led clients
Slingshot swish	Cue image snaps away and the desired image bounces back	Adding energy and fun

4 · SUBMODALITY TECHNIQUES

Submodality belief change and like-to-dislike

Beliefs, preferences and cravings also have a submodality 'code'. Practitioners contrast how a person represents different degrees of certainty or attraction, then move a target belief or craving into a different code.

Belief change via submodalities



Each belief is coded in a different location and with different submodalities; moving a belief along this path changes how certain it feels.

Like-to-dislike (e.g. a food craving)



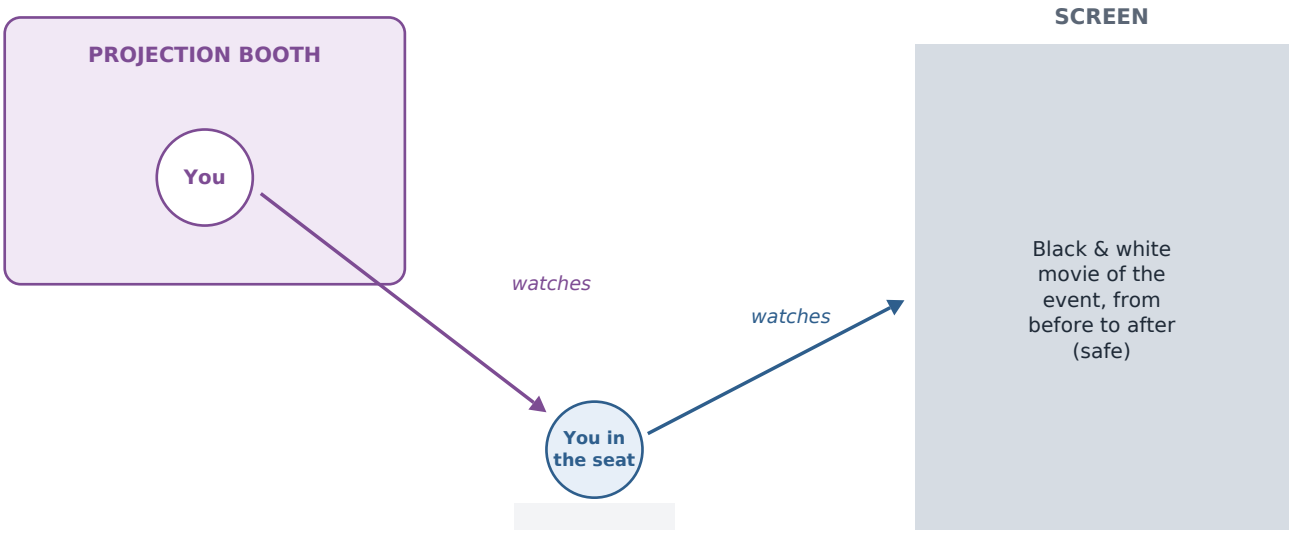
Caution	Reason
Never apply to essential foods or nutrition	Target treats and habits, not overall eating
Screen for eating-disorder history	Changing food responses is not appropriate without clinical support
Aim for indifference, not disgust	A neutral response is usually more ecological

KEY POINT

Submodality techniques work best as part of a broader plan that includes the client's values, environment and support.

The Fast Phobia Cure (V/K dissociation)

The Fast Phobia Cure, also called visual–kinesthetic (V/K) dissociation, was developed by Richard Bandler. It aims to separate a memory from its intense feeling response by having the person watch it from a **double-dissociated** position and then rewind it rapidly.



Double dissociation: watching yourself watching the memory

Principle	Rationale given in NLP
Dissociation	Seeing the event from outside reduces the felt intensity while still processing it
Double dissociation	Watching yourself watching adds a further safety buffer for strong reactions
Safe start and end	The movie starts before and ends after the event, at a point of safety
Fast backward rewind	Running it associated, backwards, in 1–2 seconds scrambles the original sequence
Repetition	Rewinding several times, faster each time, until the response is neutral

RESEARCH NOTE

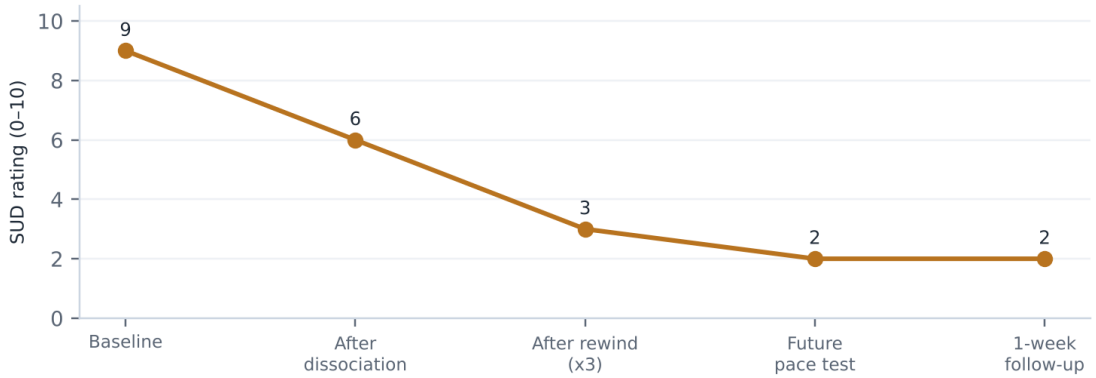
Related protocol: the **Reconsolidation of Traumatic Memories (RTM)** protocol is based on this technique. Small randomised trials with veterans reported large reductions in PTSD symptoms; larger independent studies are still needed.

5 · PHOBIAS & DIFFICULT MEMORIES

Fast Phobia Cure: step by step

The procedure is usually completed in a single session. The practitioner calibrates continuously and keeps the client dissociated until the rewind step.

1	**Resource state**	Anchor a calm, safe state the client can return to at any time.
2	**Cinema**	Imagine sitting in a cinema; on the screen, a black-and-white still from before the event.
3	**Float to the booth**	Float out of your body into the projection booth, watching yourself in the seat.
4	**Run the movie**	Watch yourself watching the movie in black and white, to a safe point after the event. Freeze.
5	**Associate at the end**	Step into the final safe frame, in colour.
6	**Rewind fast**	Run the movie backwards, associated, in colour, in 1–2 seconds. Repeat several times.
7	**Test & future pace**	Think of the trigger; imagine a future encounter. Calibrate the response.



Hypothetical example: tracking a client's Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) across a session.

5 · PHOBIAS & DIFFICULT MEMORIES

Safety, scope and alternatives

Phobia and trauma work carries real risk. Responsible NLP practice is clear about what it is — and is not — suitable for, and about when to refer.

Generally suited to	Needs clinical care / referral
Simple, specific phobias (spiders, lifts, flying, needles)	Complex or developmental trauma
Single-incident unpleasant memories	PTSD with severe symptoms, dissociation or self-harm
Performance anxiety tied to one past event	Active suicidal thoughts or psychosis
Clients who are stable and well-resourced	Ongoing abuse or unsafe circumstances

Related NLP approaches to difficult memories

Change personal history
Bring resources back to past memories so they are re-experienced differently

Reimprinting
Revisit formative experiences from multiple perceptual positions

Timeline techniques
View events from above the timeline to release negative emotions

Submodality shifts
Make the memory smaller, further, dimmer, still

Reframing
Find the learning or alternative meaning of the event

Resource anchoring
Ensure a calm state is available before any memory work

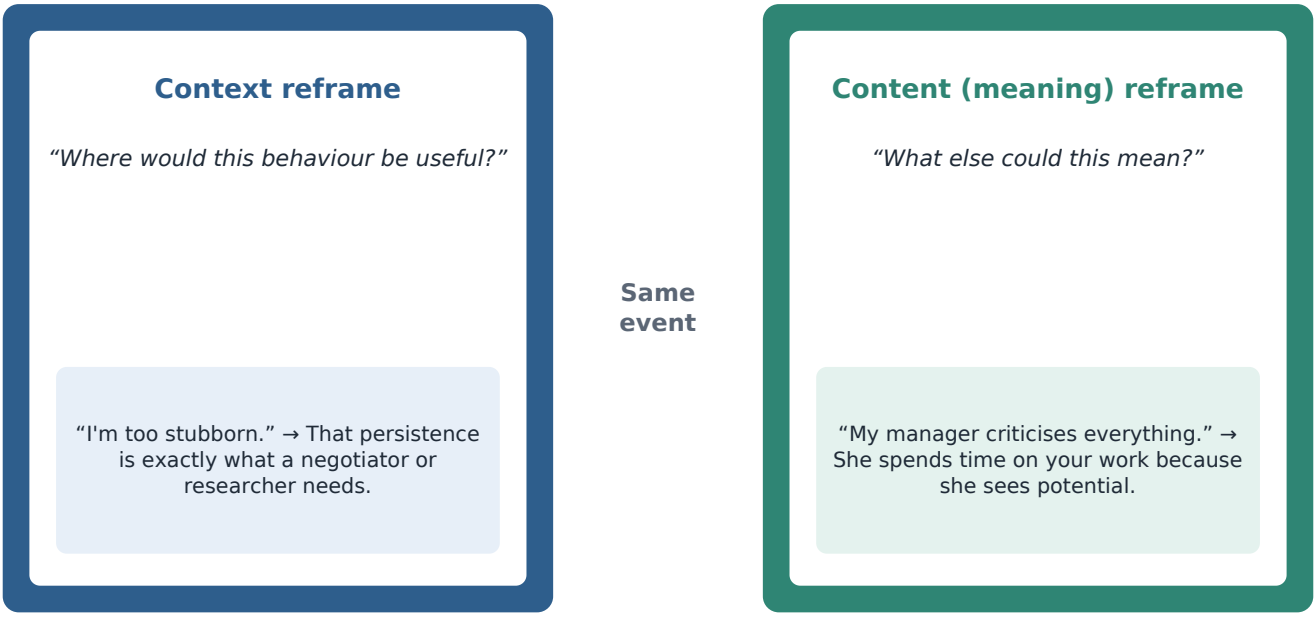
SAFETY

Practitioners without clinical training should work only within their competence, obtain informed consent and refer to licensed mental-health professionals when trauma is complex or the person is at risk.

6 · REFRAMING

Reframing: changing the frame

The meaning of any event depends on the **frame** through which it is seen. Reframing offers a different frame so the same behaviour or event produces a more useful response. Bandler and Grinder drew on Virginia Satir's and Milton Erickson's work in *Reframing* (1982).



Reframe type	Client statement	Possible reframe
Context	“I'm too sensitive.”	“In which situations is that sensitivity a gift?”
Meaning	“I failed the exam.”	“You've just found out exactly what to study next.”
Intention	“I procrastinate.”	“Part of you wants to protect you from doing it badly.”
Time	“I'll never get this.”	“You haven't got it *yet*.”
Outcome	“I'm worried about the talk.”	“That energy shows how much it matters to you.”

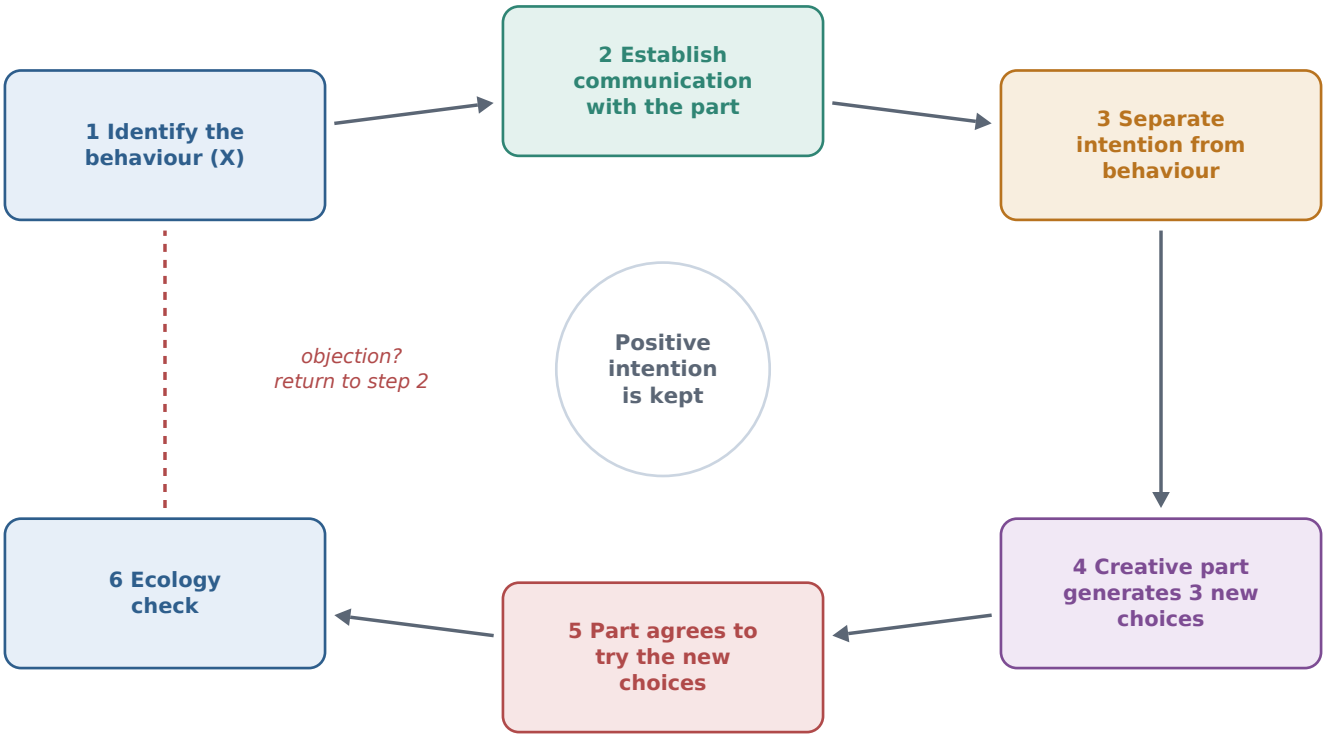
KEY POINT

A reframe works only if it fits the client's values and evidence. Calibrate: a successful reframe produces a visible shift (a pause, a smile, a breath). A clever but unconvincing reframe sounds dismissive.

6 · REFRAMING

Six-step reframing

Six-step reframing works with the idea that an unwanted behaviour is produced by a 'part' with a **positive intention**. Instead of fighting the behaviour, the client finds new ways to satisfy the same intention.



Step	Typical wording
1. Identify X	“What is the behaviour you want to change?”
2. Communicate	“Ask inside: will the part that does X communicate with me? Notice any signal.”
3. Intention	“Ask the part: what are you trying to do for me by doing X?”
4. New choices	“Ask your creative part for three other ways to achieve that intention.”
5. Agreement	“Will the part try these choices in the relevant contexts?”
6. Ecology	“Does any other part object to these new choices?”

KEY POINT

Signals are often involuntary: a feeling, a twitch, warmth. The practitioner calibrates for them and treats them as yes/no answers from the part.

6 · REFRAMING

Sleight of Mouth: conversational reframing

Robert Dilts' **Sleight of Mouth** (1999) organises verbal reframing into 14 patterns for loosening limiting beliefs in conversation. Each targets a belief statement of the form “X means/causes Y”.

Pattern	Belief: “I'm too old to change careers.”
Intention	“It sounds like you want to make a wise, safe choice.”
Redefine	“Maybe it's not 'too old' — it's 'experienced'.”
Consequence	“Believing that may keep you in a job you've outgrown.”
Chunk down	“Which part of changing, specifically, does age affect?”
Chunk up	“So no one should ever learn anything new after a certain age?”
Counter-example	“Have you met people who changed career at your age?”
Analogy / metaphor	“Old trees still grow new branches every spring.”
Apply to self	“Is that belief too old to change?”
Another outcome	“The question isn't age but what you'd enjoy doing.”
Hierarchy of criteria	“What matters more — age, or living with regret?”
Change frame size	“Looking back at 80, how will this decision look?”
Meta frame	“When did you start believing age decides this?”
Model of the world	“Many industries actively hire experienced career changers.”
Reality strategy	“How do you know you're too old? What tells you that?”

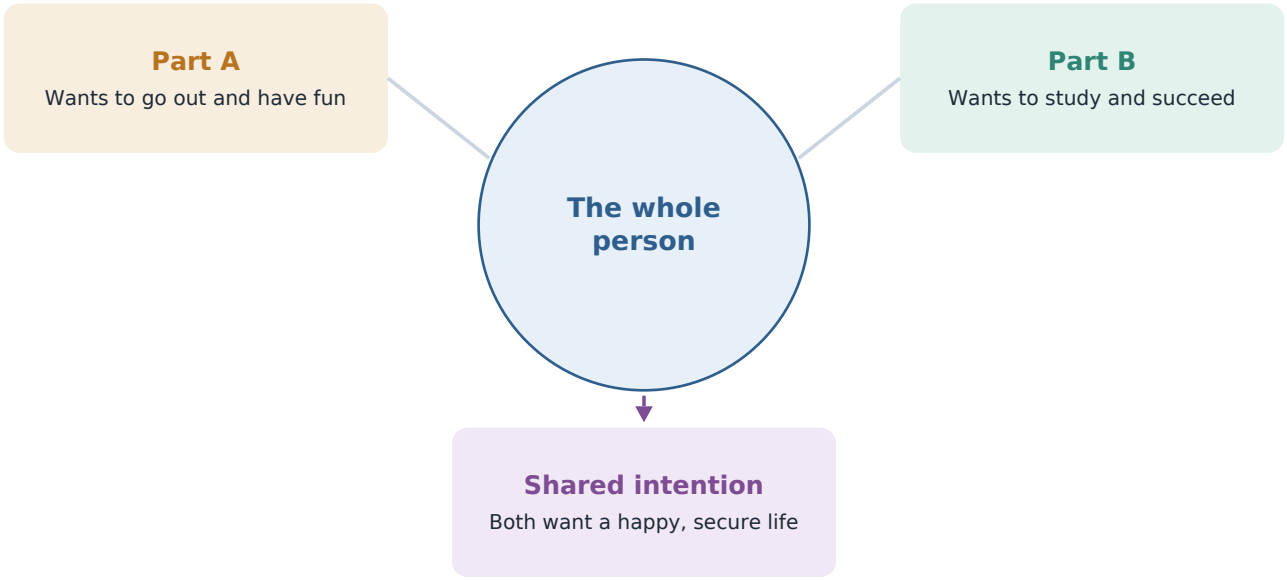
KEY POINT

Sleight of Mouth patterns can be used to **open** beliefs, not to win arguments. Used combatively they damage rapport.

7 · PARTS WORK

The parts model

NLP treats inner conflict (“part of me wants to…, but part of me…”) as the result of **parts** — clusters of behaviours, beliefs and states, each with a positive intention. Change comes from honouring and integrating those intentions, not overpowering one part with another.



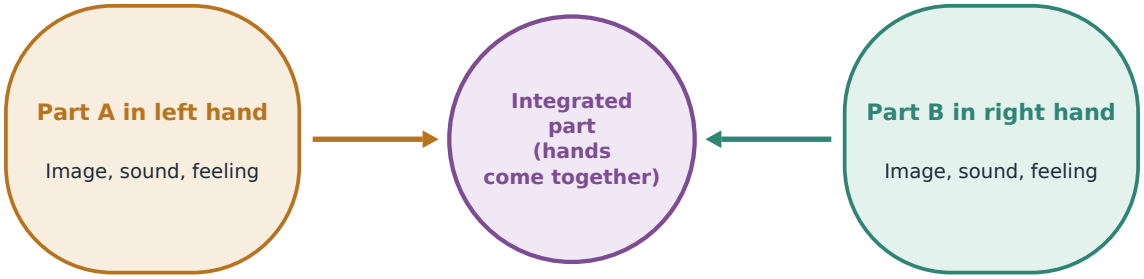
Principle	In practice
Every part has a positive intention	Ask what the part is trying to achieve or protect
Parts form in different contexts	Often from earlier life stages, with older resources
Conflict signals incongruence	Look for mixed signals: “yes” with a head shake, asymmetry
Higher intentions are shared	Chunking up usually reveals a common goal
Integration beats suppression	A suppressed part often 'leaks' later as self-sabotage

> **NOTE**
> Parts language is a **metaphor** for organising experience, not a claim that the mind literally contains separate entities. Similar ideas appear in Gestalt and Internal Family Systems therapy.

7 · PARTS WORK

Parts integration (the visual squash)

Parts integration, often called the **visual squash**, resolves a conflict between two parts. Each is imagined in one hand; their intentions are chunked up until a shared purpose is found; then the hands are slowly brought together and the integrated part taken inside.

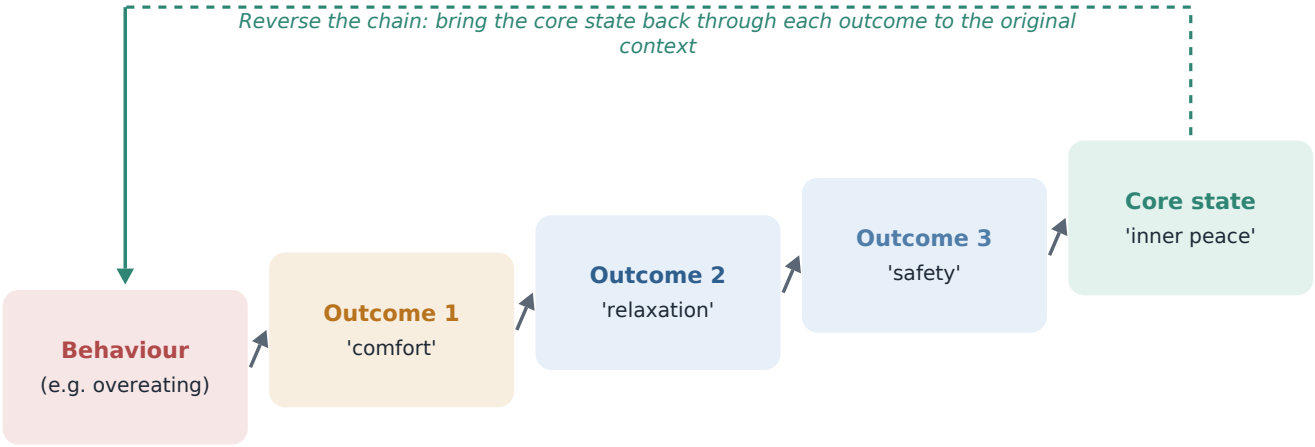


1	**Identify the conflict**	“Part of me wants X, but part of me wants Y.”
2	**Externalise parts**	Place each part in a hand; describe how each looks, sounds, feels.
3	**Find intentions**	Ask each part: “What do you want for me through this?”
4	**Chunk up**	Keep asking “And what does that give me?” until intentions match.
5	**Exchange resources**	Each part notices what the other has that it could use.
6	**Integrate**	Let the hands move together at their own pace; notice a new image.
7	**Take it inside**	Bring the integrated part into the body; future pace.

7 · PARTS WORK

Core Transformation

Developed by Connirae Andreas with Tamara Andreas (*Core Transformation*, 1994), this process follows a part's intentions up an **outcome chain** to a 'core state' — such as inner peace, love, being or OK-ness — and then lets that state transform each step of the chain.



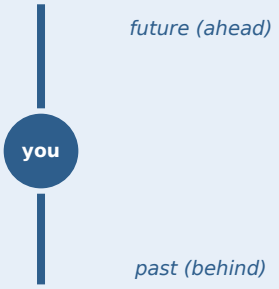
Phase	Key question
Find the part	“Where is this part? Welcome it and thank it.”
Outcome chain	“What do you want through this?” — then, “If you have that fully, what do you want through that?”
Core state	Continue until the answer is a state of being with no further 'want'
Reverse the chain	“How does already having [core state] transform [each outcome]?”
Grow up the part	Let the part grow to your current age, with the core state
Check other parts	“Is there any part that objects?” and repeat the process with it

Common core states	
Being · Inner peace · Love · OK-ness · Oneness	Clients often describe them with metaphors of light, spaciousness or warmth

Timelines: how people code time

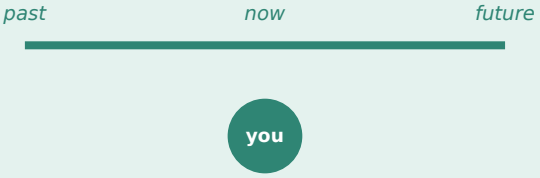
NLP proposes that people represent time spatially: when asked to point to the past and the future, most indicate consistent directions. This 'timeline' is the basis for several interventions.

In time



Timeline passes through the body: past behind, future in front. Associated, present-focused; time feels flexible.

Through time



Timeline runs left to right in front of the person; all of it visible. Dissociated, planning-oriented; punctual.

Eliciting a timeline

Question	What you notice
“If you were to point to your past, where would it be?”	Direction (behind, left, down…)
“And your future?”	Direction and distance
“Think of brushing your teeth a year ago, last week, next week… where are those?”	Locations of images; shape of the line
“Are you on the line, or watching it?”	In time vs. through time

NOTE

The in-time / through-time distinction is a practitioner model. Treat it as a useful description of how a particular client represents time, not as a fixed personality type.

Time Line Therapy®

Time Line Therapy was developed by Tad James, building on work with Wyatt Woodsmall (*Time Line Therapy and the Basis of Personality*, 1988). The client floats above their timeline to the first event connected with a negative emotion or limiting decision, preserves the learnings and lets the emotion release.

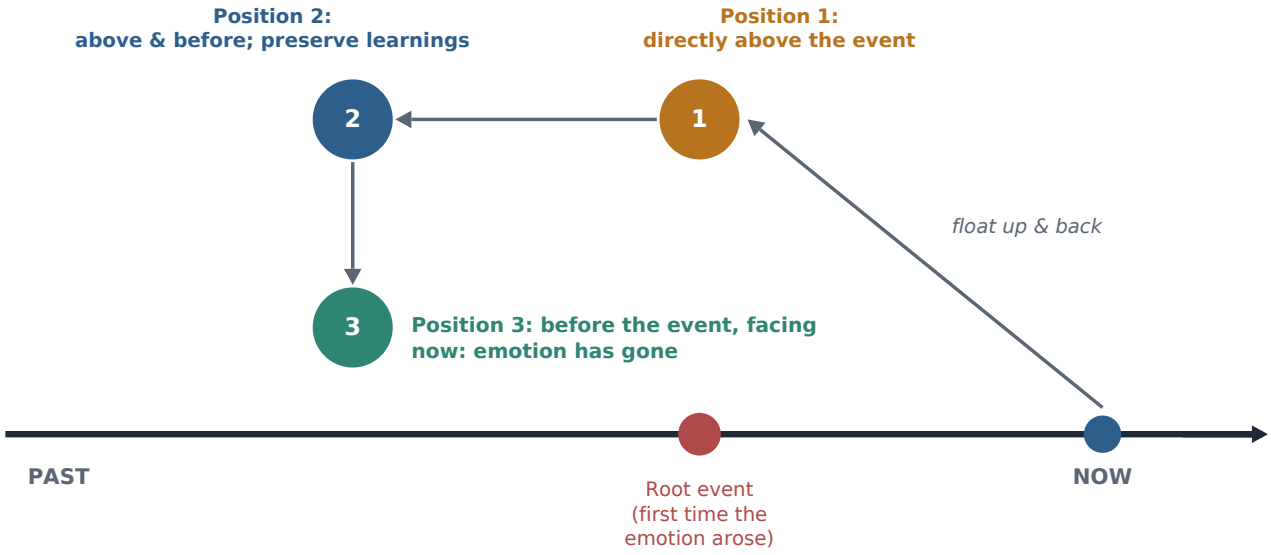


Figure: the three positions above the timeline relative to the root event.

Stage	What happens
Identify the issue	e.g. anger, sadness, fear, guilt, or a limiting decision
Find the root cause	“If you were to know, when was the first event that, when disconnected, would make the problem disappear?”
Float above the timeline	Dissociated view of the past from position 1
Preserve the learnings	“What do you need to learn from this event so you can let the emotion go?”
Move to position 3	Before the event, facing now: “Where is the emotion now?”
Return & test	Come back along the line, clearing later events; future pace

EVIDENCE NOTE

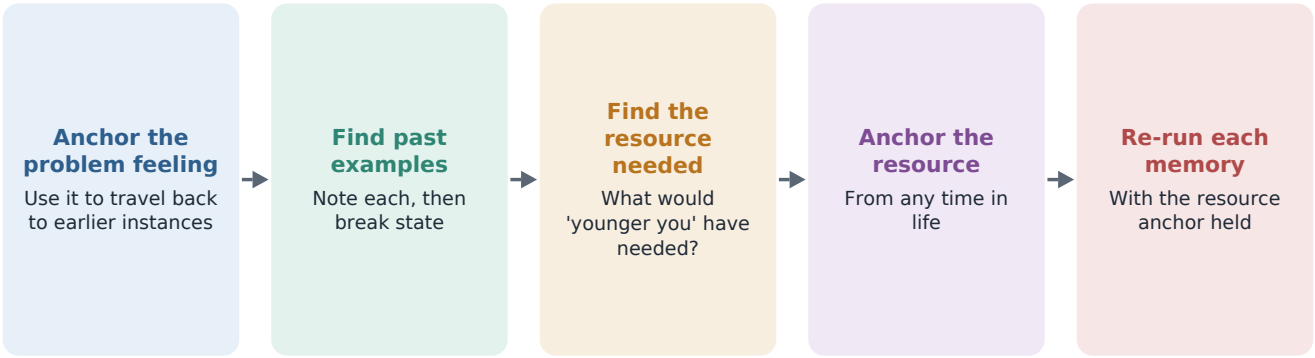
Time Line Therapy is a trademarked, proprietary approach and has little independent research. Treat claims of permanent change with caution and evaluate results case by case.

8 · TIME, TIMELINES & BELIEFS

Change personal history and future pacing

Two simpler time-based techniques are part of standard NLP practitioner training: **change personal history** brings resources to past experiences, and **future pacing** rehearses the change in future contexts.

Change personal history



Future pacing

“Imagine the next time X happens... what do you notice now?”



Why future pace?	Detail
Tests the change	Calibrate for old cues when imagining the trigger
Links the change to real contexts	The new response becomes attached to future cues
Reveals ecology issues	Objections often appear only when the future is imagined

KEY POINT

Almost every NLP technique ends with a future pace. If the client cannot imagine the new response, the work is not finished.

Reimprinting

Robert Dilts developed reimprinting for **imprints**: significant past experiences, often involving key people, from which limiting beliefs about self or the world were formed. The process revisits the imprint from several perspectives and brings missing resources to everyone involved.

1	**Identify the belief**	Locate the limiting belief and its associated feeling.
2	**Regress on a timeline**	Walk back along the timeline to the imprint experience.
3	**Step off & observe**	From a meta-position, notice what beliefs were formed by each person.
4	**Find positive intentions**	What were the significant others trying to do?
5	**Find missing resources**	What did each person need? Anchor those resources.
6	**Re-experience**	Step into each person's position with their resource; then your own.
7	**Walk to the present**	Bring the updated belief forward to now and the future.

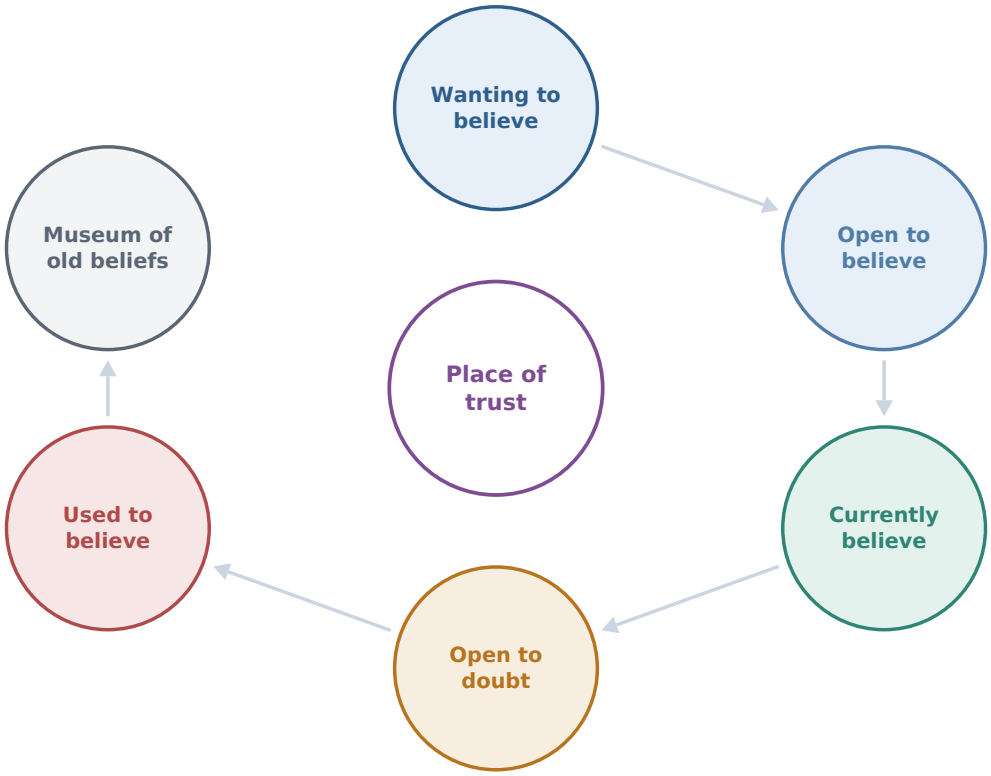
Imprint example	Belief formed	Updated belief after reimprinting
Teacher mocks a wrong answer in class	“Speaking up is dangerous.”	“My ideas are worth sharing; mistakes are part of learning.”
Parent too busy to listen	“My feelings don't matter.”	“My feelings matter, and I can ask to be heard.”

KEY POINT

Reimprinting works with significant emotional material and should be done in a safe setting, with resource anchors in place before regression.

The belief change cycle

Robert Dilts describes beliefs as moving through a natural cycle. The belief change cycle is often run as a **spatial** exercise: each stage is a location on the floor, and the client walks a new belief in and an old belief out.



Stage	What the client does
Wanting to believe	Step in with the new, desired belief
Open to believe	Notice the possibility it could be true
Currently believe	Old limiting belief here: step forward with it
Open to doubt	Notice what has changed; the old belief may no longer fit
Used to believe	Old belief moves here, with thanks for what it did
Museum of old beliefs	Place the old belief alongside others outgrown
Place of trust	Return here between steps to stay resourceful

9 · LANGUAGE PATTERNS

The Meta Model: precision questions

The Meta Model, NLP's first model (*The Structure of Magic*, 1975), uses questions to recover detail lost when people put experience into words. As an intervention, it challenges **deletions, distortions and generalisations** that limit choice.

Category	Pattern	Example	Challenge
Deletion	Unspecified noun	“They don't respect me.”	Who specifically?
Deletion	Comparative deletion	“I should do better.”	Better than what?
Deletion	Unspecified verb	“He hurt me.”	How specifically?
Generalisation	Universal quantifier	“I never get it right.”	Never? Not even once?
Generalisation	Modal operator	“I can't say no.”	What stops you? What would happen if you did?
Distortion	Mind reading	“She thinks I'm useless.”	How do you know she thinks that?
Distortion	Cause–effect	“He makes me angry.”	How does what he does cause you to choose anger?
Distortion	Complex equivalence	“No reply means he's angry.”	Has there been a time no reply meant something else?
Distortion	Nominalisation	“Our communication is poor.”	How would you like to communicate?
Distortion	Lost performative	“It's wrong to cry.”	According to whom?



KEY POINT

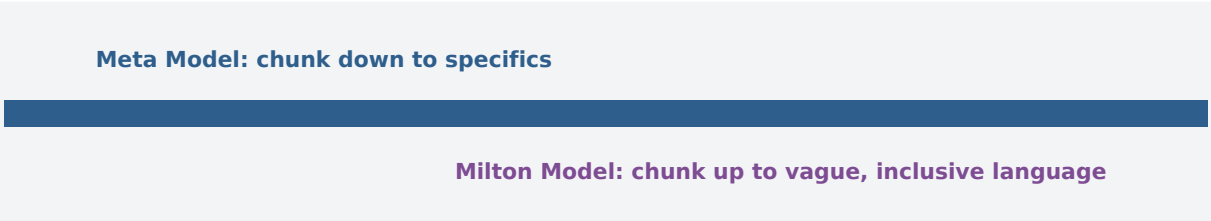
Soften challenges with rapport: “I'm curious, how do you know…?” Rapid-fire questioning feels like interrogation.

9 · LANGUAGE PATTERNS

The Milton Model: artfully vague language

The Milton Model is the mirror image of the Meta Model. Modeled from Milton H. Erickson's hypnotic work, it uses **deliberately vague** language so the listener fills in meaning from their own experience, bypassing resistance and supporting change.

Pattern	Example	Effect
Mind read	“You may be wondering what you'll learn…”	Paces likely experience
Cause–effect	“As you breathe out, you can relax more deeply.”	Links a sure thing to a suggestion
Presupposition	“Will you notice the calm before or after you sit down?”	Assumes the outcome
Embedded command	“You can **feel more confident** as we talk.”	Suggestion marked by tone
Double bind	“You can change quickly or gradually.”	Choice between two change options
Universal quantifier	“Everyone has times of deep calm.”	Generalised permission
Nominalisation	“You can find a new understanding.”	Listener supplies the meaning
Tag question	“That makes sense, doesn't it?”	Invites agreement
Conversational postulate	“Can you imagine that?”	Yes/no question acts as a request
Quotes	“A teacher once told me, 'You can learn this easily.'”	Suggestion through another voice



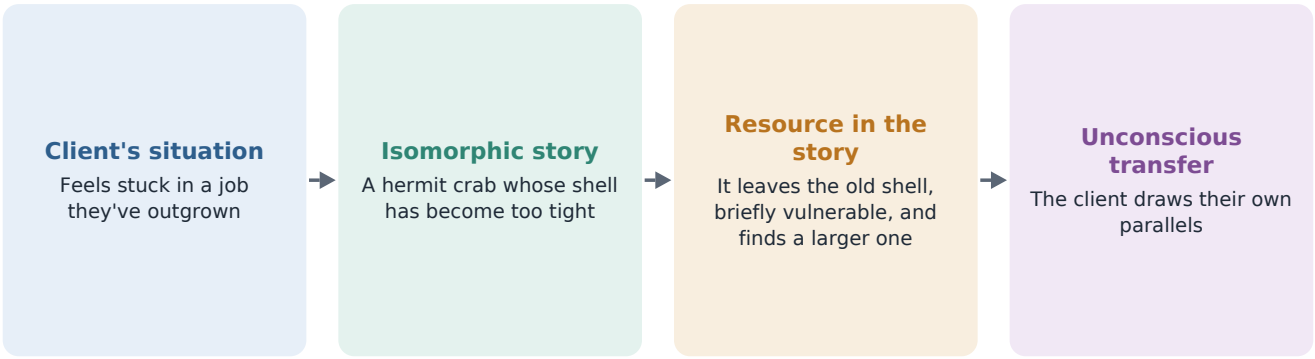
ETHICS

Milton patterns are used ethically to support a client's chosen outcomes. Using them to manipulate someone against their interests is a misuse.

9 · LANGUAGE PATTERNS

Therapeutic metaphor and storytelling

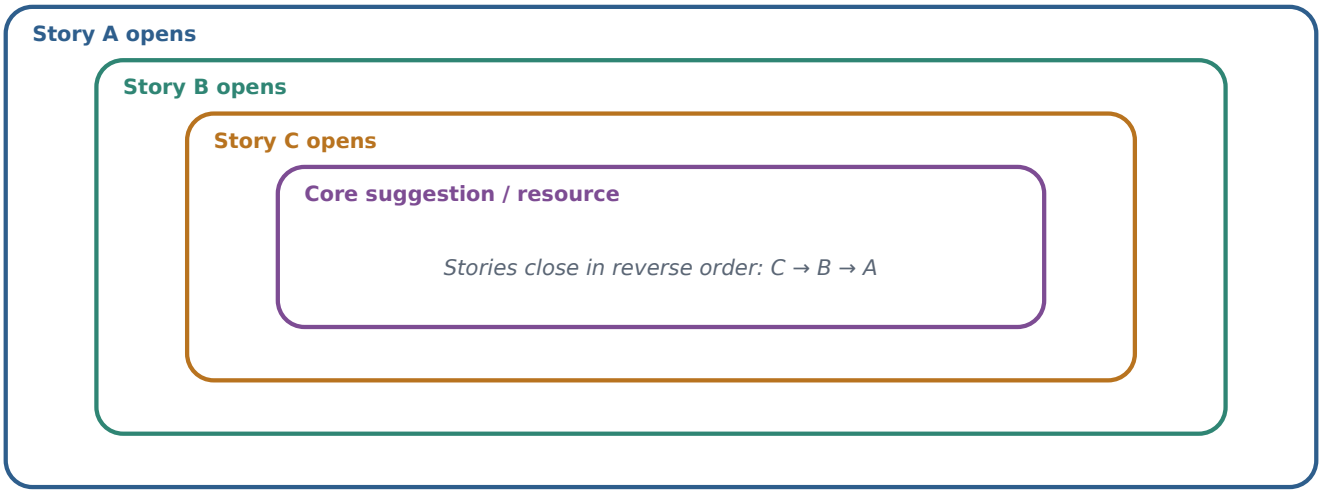
Erickson often told stories rather than giving direct advice. NLP models this as **therapeutic metaphor**: a story whose structure matches the client's situation (isomorphic) and contains a path to resolution.



Building an isomorphic metaphor

Client's situation	Story element (example)
The client	A young river
The problem	A great rock blocks its path
Failed attempts	Pushing harder only makes it pool and stagnate
The resource	Water can go around, under, or wear stone away over time
The resolution	The river finds its way and reaches the sea, richer for the journey

Nested loops



KEY POINT

Metaphors respect the client's autonomy: they offer a pattern without telling the person what to do.

Strategy elicitation and installation

A **strategy** is the sequence of internal and external representations a person runs to get a result — to decide, to motivate themselves, to learn. Changing an ineffective strategy, or installing an effective one, is a core NLP intervention.

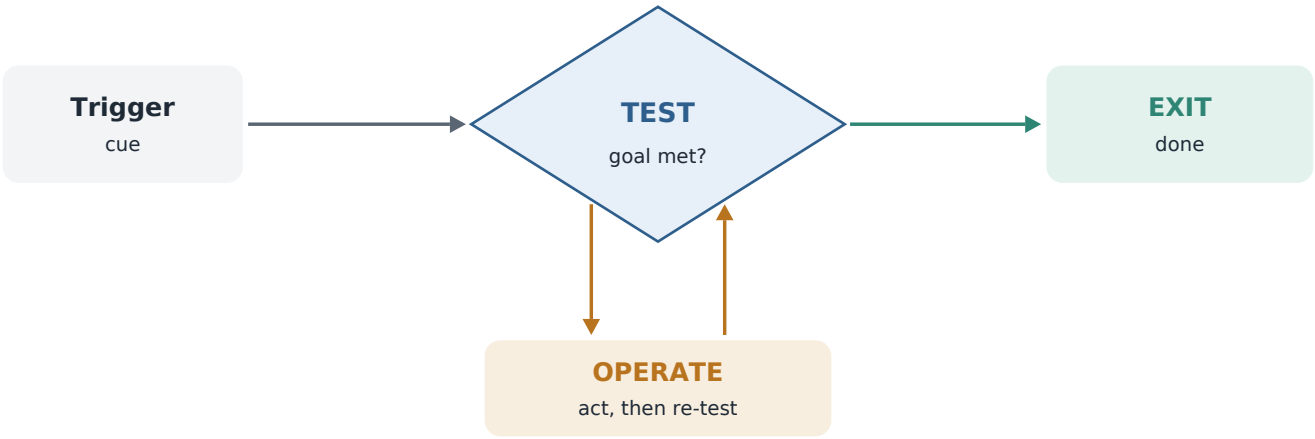


Figure: the TOTE (Test–Operate–Test–Exit) unit, the building block of NLP strategies.

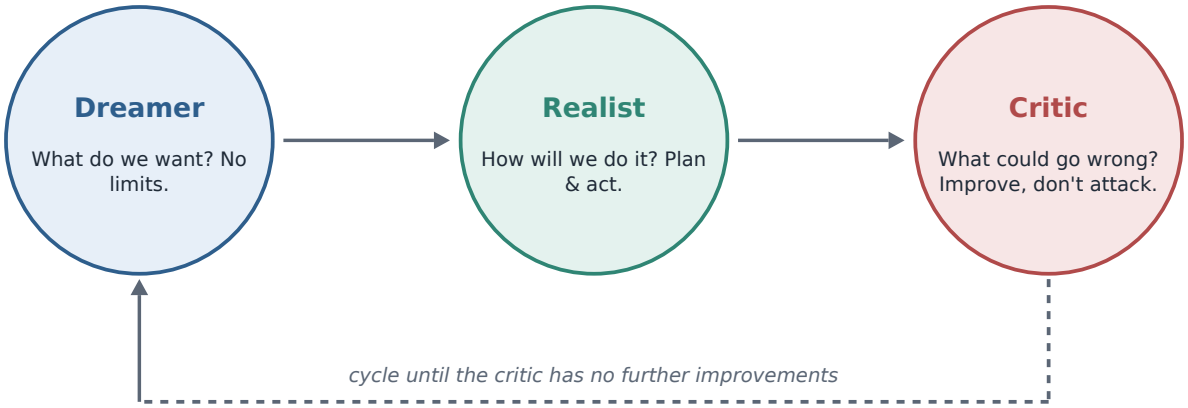
Strategy	Ineffective sequence	Effective sequence
Motivation	Picture the task as huge → feel overwhelmed → put off	Picture the finished result → feel satisfaction → take first step
Spelling	Hear the word → sound it out → guess	Hear the word → see it in memory → feel familiarity check
Decision	Self-talk loops → doubt → no decision	List options → picture each outcome → gut check → decide
Relaxing	Replay the day's problems → tension	Picture tomorrow's plan written down → release → calm

Installation method	How
Rehearsal	Run the new sequence many times, faster each time
Anchoring	Anchor each step and fire them in sequence
Metaphor	Tell a story that embeds the new sequence

Generative techniques: Disney strategy & New Code

Not all NLP work fixes problems. **Generative** techniques build creativity, flexibility and high-performance states.

The Disney creativity strategy (Dilts)



Modeled by Robert Dilts from accounts of how Walt Disney worked, the strategy separates three thinking roles, each practised in its own physical location so they don't interfere with one another.

New Code NLP games

Element	Description
Origin	John Grinder and Judith DeLozier (*Turtles All the Way Down*, 1987); later Grinder and Carmen Bostic St Clair
Aim	Change the person's **state** rather than the content of the problem
Alphabet game	Read letters while raising arms per a cue (L, R, T); difficulty rises until a 'know-nothing' state emerges
Know-nothing state	Wide peripheral vision, quiet inner dialogue, balanced physiology
Use	Enter the high-performance state, then think about the problem context

KEY POINT

New Code techniques are **content-free**: the practitioner doesn't need to know the details of the problem, which suits clients who prefer privacy.

Choosing the right technique

Techniques are chosen by **what maintains the problem**, not by its label. The matrix below shows commonly taught first choices; practitioners often combine several in one session.

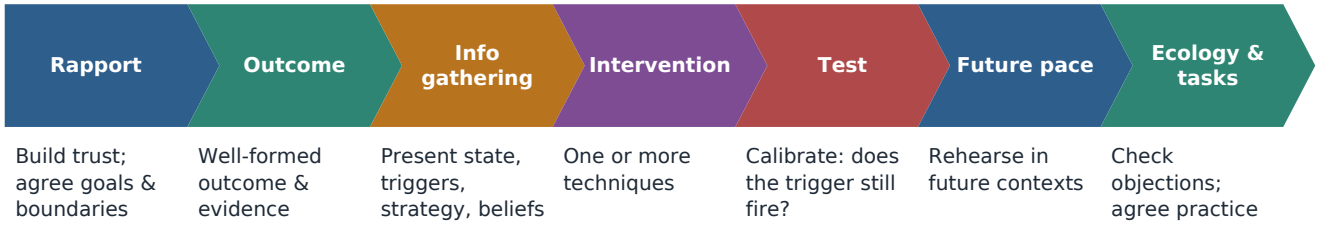


Figure: practitioner guideline for typical first-choice techniques (★ primary, ● useful, • occasionally). Not empirically derived.

If the problem is maintained by…	Look first at…
A vivid internal image or sound	Submodalities, swish, fast phobia cure
A meaning or interpretation	Reframing, sleight of mouth, Meta Model
A trigger that fires an automatic state	Anchoring, collapsing anchors
Conflicting wants	Six-step reframing, parts integration, core transformation
A past event or old decision	Timeline work, change personal history, reimprinting
An ineffective sequence of thinking	Strategy elicitation and installation

Structure of an NLP session

Whatever techniques are used, a coaching or change session usually follows a recognisable arc from rapport to future pacing.



Phase	Approx. share of session	Key questions
Rapport & contracting	10%	What would make this session worthwhile for you?
Outcome setting	15%	What do you want instead? How will you know?
Information gathering	25%	How do you do the problem? What happens first?
Intervention	30%	(technique-specific)
Test & future pace	10%	Think of it now — what's different?
Ecology & next steps	10%	Any part of you that objects? What will you practise?

Percentages are an illustrative guide, not a fixed rule.

Testing the change

Behavioural test
Expose to a safe version of the trigger in the session

Calibration test
Compare cues now with the baseline

Real-world test
Follow-up after real encounters

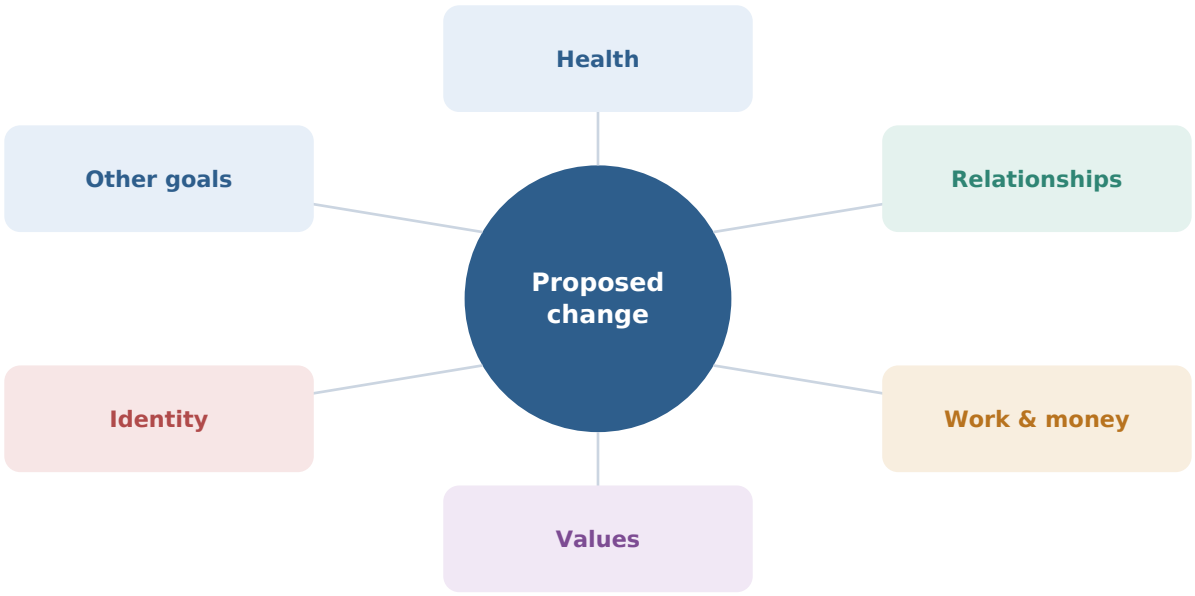
KEY POINT

The client's experience is the test, not the completion of the steps. If the trigger still fires, gather more information and try another approach.

11 · PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Ecology: is the change good for the whole system?

In NLP, **ecology** means considering the effect of a change on the person's whole life — health, relationships, work, values and identity. An ecology check is built into almost every technique.



Ecology question	Purpose
“What will happen if you get this?”	Positive consequences
“What won't happen if you get this?”	Losses or by-products
“What will happen if you don't get this?”	Cost of staying the same
“What won't happen if you don't get this?”	Hidden benefits of the problem
“Is there any part of you that objects?”	Inner conflict (calibrate for incongruence)

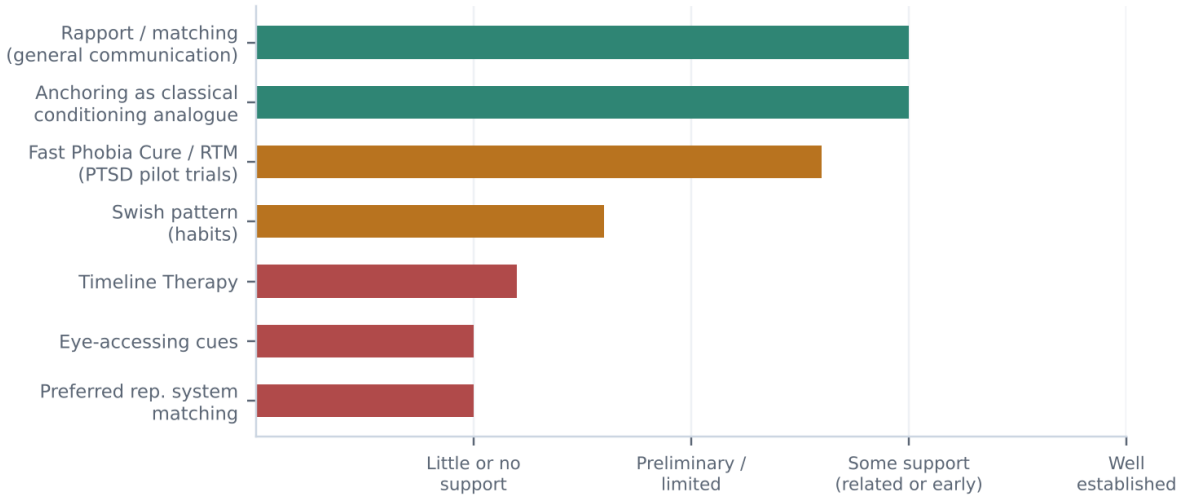
KEY POINT

These four 'Cartesian' questions are a quick way to surface secondary gains that could undo a change.

11 · PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Evidence, limitations and ethics

NLP is widely used in coaching, training and personal development, but its research base is limited. Reviews such as Witkowski (2010) found little empirical support for core NLP claims, and some techniques have been studied far more than others.



Interpretive summary of the published research landscape, not a meta-analysis.

Ethical principle	In practice
Informed consent	Explain what a technique involves and that results vary
Work within competence	Refer complex mental-health issues to licensed clinicians
Client autonomy	Use language patterns to support the client's goals, never to manipulate
Honest claims	Avoid promising 'instant' or 'permanent' cures
Measure outcomes	Track client-rated change (e.g. SUD ratings) and follow up

BALANCED VIEW

A balanced stance: use NLP techniques as **structured, testable procedures**, measure results with each client, and combine them with evidence-based approaches where appropriate.

Quick reference: core techniques at a glance

A one-page summary of the techniques covered in this guide.

Technique	Use for	Core move	Origin
Rapport / pacing & leading	Trust, influence	Match, then lead	Bandler & Grinder
Calibration	Feedback during work	Link cues to states	Bandler & Grinder
Anchoring	On-demand states	Stimulus at state peak	Bandler & Grinder
Collapsing anchors	Unwanted reactions	Fire resource + problem together	Bandler & Grinder
Circle of Excellence	Peak performance	Spatial resource anchor	Grinder & DeLozier
Swish pattern	Habits, reactions	Replace cue image with desired self	Bandler
Fast Phobia Cure	Phobias, single memories	Double dissociation + fast rewind	Bandler
Mapping across	Beliefs, cravings	Recode submodalities	Bandler
Reframing	Meaning, resistance	Change context or meaning	Bandler & Grinder
Six-step reframing	Unwanted behaviour	New choices for same intention	Bandler & Grinder
Sleight of Mouth	Limiting beliefs	14 verbal reframes	Dilts
Parts integration	Inner conflict	Chunk up to shared intention	Bandler & Grinder
Core Transformation	Deep patterns	Outcome chain to core state	C. & T. Andreas
Time Line Therapy	Emotions, decisions	Float above root event	James & Woodsmall
Change personal history	Past experiences	Bring resources back	Bandler & Grinder
Reimprinting	Imprinted beliefs	Resources for all in imprint	Dilts
Belief change cycle	Beliefs	Walk beliefs through stages	Dilts
Meta-mirror	Relationships	Cycle perceptual positions	Dilts
Meta / Milton Models	Language	Specify / generalise	Bandler & Grinder
Strategy installation	Skills, motivation	Re-sequence TOTE steps	Dilts et al.
Disney strategy	Creativity	Dreamer, Realist, Critic	Dilts

Glossary and further reading

Key terms and the principal sources for the techniques covered.

Term	Definition
Anchor	A stimulus linked to a state, which can later trigger that state
Associated / dissociated	Experiencing from inside your own body vs. watching yourself from outside
Calibration	Reading a person's non-verbal cues to recognise their states
Ecology	The effect of a change on the whole person and their wider system
Future pacing	Mentally rehearsing a change in a future context
Part	A cluster of behaviours and intentions experienced as 'part of me'
Reframe	Changing the context or meaning in which an experience is understood
Submodality	A quality within a sense, e.g. brightness, volume, location
SUD rating	Subjective Units of Distress, a 0–10 self-rating of distress

Author(s)	Title	Year
Bandler, R. & Grinder, J.	Frogs into Princes	1979
Bandler, R. & Grinder, J.	Reframing	1982
Bandler, R.	Using Your Brain — For a Change	1985
James, T. & Woodsmall, W.	Time Line Therapy and the Basis of Personality	1988
Dilts, R., Hallbom, T. & Smith, S.	Beliefs: Pathways to Health & Well-being	1990
Andreas, C. & Andreas, T.	Core Transformation	1994
Dilts, R.	Sleight of Mouth	1999
Witkowski, T.	Thirty-five years of research on Neuro-Linguistic Programming	2010