

*NLP in a nutshell*  
Should we wash our brains?

Are you dissatisfied with your life because you feel that you could do so much better? Have you considered applying NLP and “washing your brain”? Would you like to become a member of the “brain laundering” NLP community? I recommend that you suppress your decision until after you are filled in on NLP.

NLP is about making people successful by changing or adding new behavioural patterns. One of the basic premises of NLP is that successful behaviour can be emulated and models for different situations and purposes can be developed. In the NLP jargon this is called ‘Modelling’.

What does the abbreviation NLP stand for?

*Neuro:*                      *refers to our five senses*

*Linguistic:*                *refers to our verbal and non-verbal language*

*Programming:*        *refers to our behavioural patterns and our way of thinking*

These three parts interact with each other. Our language (L) and our perception (N) are impacted by our way of thinking (P). Our behaviour, our actions and the results we get are the manifestation of our thoughts. The following quote relates to the core of NLP:

If you always think what you've always thought,  
You will always do what you've always done.  
If you always do what you've always done,  
You will always get what you've always got.  
If you always get what you've always got,  
You will always think what you've always thought.  
(UNKNOWN AUTHOR)

Source: [www.rawfoodinfo.com/articles/qte\\_successfail.html](http://www.rawfoodinfo.com/articles/qte_successfail.html)

The above quote illustrates an infinite loop which goes from the thought to the action to the result and back to the thought. If the result should be different the way of thinking has to be adapted; otherwise people are stuck in a rut. Therefore, NLP is also about stepping out of your box to change your perspective and your angle in order to achieve better results.

NLP also provides concepts, techniques, tools and recipes which can be applied to improve people’s performances in different situations. In the following some of these NLP concepts, which I consider relevant, will be introduced<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> I heard about these methods at a Pegasus NLP course in South England in March 2011.

COMFORT ZONE

According to the comfort zone concept people get stronger and grow as a person when they take risks repeatedly. They “feel the fear and do it anyway”<sup>2</sup>. Skills can be developed by an approach of stretching, relaxing and expanding your comfort zone.

4RS + GENUINE INTEREST

The four Rs combined with a genuine interest in the other person can be used to establish rapport, which is crucial for effective communication.

- Respect:** If there is no respect towards the conversational partner the whole communication is flawed.
- Recognition:** This is about recognising your partner’s language (verbal and non-verbal) if you have lost eye contact you might have lost rapport too.
- Reassurance:** It is very important that none of the “players” is put on the spot or fears to lose their face. The atmosphere should be comfortable and safe.
- Responsibility:** Act as if you are responsible for your partner’s responses.

For the last ‘R’ I am a bit critical concerning the “Act as if” approach. If you just act as if your body language might not play along. To my mind it is better to take the responsibility for your partner’s reactions and resolve to find a connection.

LOGICAL LEVELS

MISSION/VISION
IDENTITY + SELF-ESTEEM
BELIEFS + VALUES + MOTIVATION
CAPABILITIES & SKILLS
BEHAVIOUR
ENVIRONMENT

Genuine interest and curiosity are essential for applying the logical levels which can be used as a recipe for communication. Good communicators apply the logical levels intuitively; they work from the outside to the inside from the surface to the core of the person.

---

<sup>2</sup> “Feel the Fear and do it Anyway” is a book written by Susan Jeffers

## ANCHORS

Positive anchors are experiences which can be brought to your mind any time you like. In stressful and critical situations these positive anchors can be accessed to remind people that they can handle the coming situation. Negative anchors are like gatecrashers; they don't need an invitation to show up. These negative anchors can paralyse people and keep them from doing the things they intend to do.

Sometimes people might see a negative anchor coming because Murphy's Law<sup>3</sup> seems to apply. Then it is high time to resolve to defend yourself against setting the negative anchor and to take action in order to turn the tide. Mental rehearsal is a powerful tool which can support you to fight against the not as yet set negative anchor.

## MENTAL REHEARSAL

Mental rehearsal is playing something through in your mind before you actually go into the situation. It is a tool which can be combined with back-from the future thinking. In your mental rehearsal you could make up some facts and experiences which haven't happened yet but as there is still time until you really are in the situation you can still make it happen. An extreme form of mental rehearsal is to conceive your own eulogy and to have a look at your own funeral.

Have you managed to suppress your decision about whether you should or shouldn't 'wash your brain' by applying NLP? I reckon that most people would say or think something like "No way – I'm not going to wash my brain." and as I see it this is a healthy attitude. "Washing your brain" has a negative connotation; it's associated with losing both control and identity. To my mind it's very important that people are resilient in this regard. Personally, I have no problem with the phrase "wash my brain" as long as the quotes are put at the right spot. "Washing your brain" can be interpreted as changing your behavioural patterns; reprogramming your mind. As long as people are in control of this mental "change management" and as long as they stay authentic as a person it's not washing their brain in the negative meaning of the phrase.

People who react negatively to the eclectic umbrella term NLP are inclined to see all related techniques, tools and concepts in a bad light. This is like throwing away a parcel because you don't like the packaging. In this essay five NLP concepts were introduced: COMFORT ZONE, 4 RS + GENUINE INTEREST, LOGICAL

---

<sup>3</sup> Murphy's law "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong".

LEVELS, ANCHORS & MENTAL REHEARSAL. All but one of these tools could be misused just the same as you could misuse a hammer. A cat burglar could use the comfort zone concept to improve their skill of climbing and stealing; a womanizer could apply the logical levels just because he wants to score; a serial killer could set a positive anchor for his first murder; mental rehearsal could be used to prepare for a bank robbery. Concerning the 4 Rs + GENUINE INTEREST I'm running out of ideas. I wouldn't know how to misuse it.

People with a negative attitude towards NLP would be well advised not to dump all the tools inside the NLP toolbox just because they might be misused, not least because many of the so called NLP tools stem from somewhere else originally. I know my limits when it comes to NLP. For me it doesn't feel right to "pace" my conversation partner or to "mirror" him or her and observing eye movements to figure a person out is not for me either. As I see it it's good to dump some of the NLP techniques and tools but it might be worth considering adopting others.

The single most important message and my final request in this essay is as follows: If you have a toolbox with a hammer, a screwdriver, a spanner, a paper knife and a measuring tape please don't throw away everything just because you don't like the design of the toolbox. Keep the tools if you consider them handy and actually use these tools. It could change your life for the better.