
Great Connections

with Neuro-Linguistic Programming

by Chris Keeler and Dr. Linda Ferguson



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WELCOME TO NLP CANADA TRAINING INC.



Chris Keeler and Linda Ferguson teach integrated thinking for great connections

Neuro-linguistic programming is a streamlined, practical and intensely effective set of practices for learning, communication and change. Training in NLP allows individuals more access to their best performance states and stronger abilities to connect with others. It makes individuals more whole and more wholly integrated into their families, workplaces, and communities.

NLP Canada Training Inc.

NLP Canada Training Inc. provides training and consulting in communication, change management, team-building and peak performance through NLP. We are committed to developing the field of NLP as a proven, systematic and energizing methodology for moving people towards greater achievement and satisfaction.

NLP Canada Training Inc. offers public seminars at its location on the University of Toronto campus. A current schedule of trainings is available online at www.nlpcanada.com. NLP Canada Training Inc. is a certified educational institution and we issue tax receipts for tuition fees.

Chris Keeler

Chris Keeler is a gifted and charismatic trainer and coach who has been working in neuro-linguistic programming and Ericksonian Hypnosis for almost fifteen years. Chris brings passion, intensity and extreme playfulness to his work with clients. His acuity in identifying the needs that alternatively drive and block people regularly astonishes his clients and makes him an immensely effective agent for change.

Chris has used NLP and hypnosis to create success in fields that range from policing to professional beach volleyball. He regularly works with groups and individuals to make them more aware of choice and more able to make good choices. Energetic, innovative, and mesmerizing, he influences clients to make the connections that move them forward.

The primary coach for one-to-one sessions with NLPCT inc., Chris also trains and co-trains courses in neuro-linguistic programming and Ericksonian hypnosis. Contact Chris to talk about whether hypnosis and NLP are right for you. He can be reached by email to chris@nlpcanada.com.

Linda Ferguson

Linda Ferguson, Ph.D., believes that human beings learn and function most effectively in connection with other people. Her enthusiasm, widespread learning, and deep commitment have been inspiring students for more than 20 years. She is a coach with a finely tuned ear for opportunity and a delight in leading people safely through change. Linda is also an extraordinary storyteller with a gift for building metaphors that support individual and group transformations.

A graduate of Trent University, the University of Western Ontario and the University of Toronto, Linda has taught at post-secondary institutions, written for business and trade publications, and developed customized learning experiences for people of all ages. Linda is currently responsible for the day-to-day management of NLPCT inc. and trains courses in NLP, language, metaphor and influence.

Linda can be reached by email at linda@nlpcanada.com. Talk to her about learning, communicating and working through change to reach your outcomes.

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BEGIN WITH RAPID, NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Social scientists confirm what our mothers always told us: first impressions count. We make impressions of other people within seconds of meeting them and typically those impressions hold up over time. Even if you opened up this book as soon as you sat down, by now you have already offered dozens of communication cues to your instructors and fellow students.

First impressions become pieces in a pattern that constitutes our connection to another person. While the impression may not change, the meanings we assign to those impressions will be different as we gather additional information. Special photography is often used in movies to show how a process unfolds over time. This course begins with games designed to do much the same thing: to speed up the play of signals and responses that allow human beings to make judgments and to make connections.

Essentially, our brains work by relating new information to existing information. That means we all play a game of “same/different”: specifically, when we are connecting with other people, there are parts of our brain that are busy noticing how they are the same as we are, and how they are different. When we notice physical similarities, we register “same” and are able to integrate information about that person more quickly and more comfortably.

Play with a Group to Connect & Observe

Begin with a game. Choose a time when you are part of a group gathered around a table or standing in a room (at a party, a family dinner, a business or volunteer committee meeting). Choose one person to mirror and, without looking directly at that person, begin to use the same posture, gestures, vocal tone and tempo, etc. When you notice that you are in synch, try changing something and watch that person change, too. Now choose a different person. Without changing your posture, notice something rhythmic about that person (a foot tapping, a breathing or blinking pattern) and match that rhythm with a gesture (finger, foot or pen tapping, blinking etc.) of your own. When you are in synch, change something and watch that person change, too.

Non-verbal Strategies to Build Connections

As you observe other people, you become specifically aware of the ways in which you can build effective non-verbal connections with them. In NLP terms we call this developing rapport. Rapport is created when two people share, or seem to share, the same strategies for perceiving and interpreting the world.

As you become conscious of the signals that demonstrate rapport, you gain the ability to reproduce those signals in order to create it. In essence, you gain the ability to notice signals from a subject and respond to them in ways that indicate you process information the same way they do. In this way, trust can be established by the right combination of movement, vocal qualities, and attention. When you want to establish rapport with someone, you rely on the same perceptions. You notice how that person sounds, moves, looks and breathes. Then you begin to use the same elements to communicate to them that you are someone like them.

When you match or mirror some aspect of the way someone sounds, moves looks or breathes, you will establish rapport. Matching is when you do the same thing as the other person, mirroring is when you do it as if you were a mirror image of that person. For instance, if the person across from you crosses his arms, you cross your arms (matching). If the person raises his right arm to his face, you might raise your right arm (matching) or you might raise your left arm (mirroring). If the person speaks softly and quickly, you speak softly and quickly. If she taps her foot, you tap your foot. You do all these things so naturally that you hardly notice who has started a gesture and who is mirroring it.

Ways to Match & Mirror	
Body	Match whole body position; match waist up or waist down; match gestures or movement
Head/Shoulders	Match tension, tilt, position of head
Facial Expressions	Watch for wrinkling of brow, yawning etc.
Vocal Qualities	Match pace, rhythm, tonality, pitch
Breathing	Match pace & depth of breathing
Blinking	Match blinking patterns

Pacing, Leading, and Breaking Rapport

The process of developing rapport by matching and mirroring is called pacing. When you match and mirror as a person changes his/her posture, gestures, tone, or breathing, you signal that you can be trusted. Since the goal is to be inconspicuous in this, you will sometimes pace a tapping of the foot with a movement of your hand, or the crossing of legs at the knee with the crossing of your own ankles. You will know how best to convey that you are in sync and connected.

Once you have successfully paced a subject, you can test the rapport by making a change and seeing if the other person changes with you. Begin with something as simple as crossing or uncrossing your legs, picking up a pen, or touching your face. If you have achieved rapport, the subject will match you within a few seconds. This is the first step in leading. Leading allows you to influence the state of the subject. You can lead someone out of a negative state by establishing rapport and then gradually altering aspects of his/her posture, gestures and breathing until s/he is feeling more comfortable.

NLP Quick Tip: Practice matching and mirroring whenever you are out in public. You can match someone's walk, posture, blinking and breathing whether you are on a sidewalk, in a restaurant or mall, or riding on public transit. Unless you want to meet someone, do not match or mirror for more than a few minutes. It's a powerful tool for connecting.

While rapport can be created quickly, it can also be broken as quickly as you could push the stop button on a CD player. The ability to maintain rapport over a period of time depends partly on your willingness to maintain your state and focus while matching a subject, and partly on your belief that continued rapport will be useful in gaining complete and useful information.

Ultimately, it is not comfortable to match someone who is not interested in matching us. As human beings, we seek connectedness with other people and usually enjoy being in rapport. When it is evident that someone does not want to be in rapport with us, we will make a choice between trying to create rapport and moving away (to find someone else with whom to build rapport). Knowing when to break rapport to end an unproductive interchange can be as important as knowing how to develop rapport.

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DEVELOP CONNECTIONS THROUGH INTEGRATED THINKING

It is hard to know when you have what you want unless you make an effort to be conscious of what it is you want. Take a few moments now to think about what will change in your life when you are able to make better connections with other people. Is there a specific person or group of people with whom you want to connect?

Imagine that you have already made all the changes you would like to make in the way you connect with others. Answer all the questions that follow while imagining yourself in the future after you have been successful in making these changes.

Where will you be when you know that you are connecting really effectively? When will it happen?

Now imagine what you will be doing when you realize that you have made the connection you want to make. Ask yourself what new behaviours have allowed you to make this change in your life.

Think about the strengths, skills, and capabilities you have that have allowed you to succeed in making this connection that you wanted to make in precisely the way you wanted to make it.

Notice the beliefs that you hold that support those strengths and skills that allow you to do the behaviours that have resulted in making the new connection.

Finally, complete the sentence “I am a person who. . . “ with reference to the new connection that you have been able to make or the new way that you can now choose to connect.

Allow your attention to notice a sound or image that represents this positive change in the way you connect with other people.

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WHAT IS NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING?

Neuro-linguistic programming is a set of practices that facilitate effective goal-setting, communication, and change management. Fundamentally, it is a set of best-practices based on close and creative observation of models of excellence in effecting change in other people. Its earliest developers, John Grinder and Richard Bandler, wanted to challenge conventional thinking across a range of endeavours and find ways to effect change in themselves and others that were rapid, elegant, and productive.

In the decades since it was first developed, NLP has spread across the globe and across multiple fields where it is used to set well-developed goals and achieve them by connecting more effectively with other people. Essentially, NLP works with the notion that human learning occurs in three ways simultaneously: through sensory experience, through language, and through the combination of both thoughts and sensations into patterns. NLP practices encourage people to apply integrated thinking to situations in the past, present and future. Moving easily between conscious and unconscious processes and through time, NLP facilitates rapid pattern recognition and manipulation. In other words, it teaches people to think using all their capabilities at once, to think the way that gifted learners think.

NLP works with three forces that flow through the human psyche to nurture both satisfaction and high performance: the need to set goals that satisfy our sense of who we are; the urge to gather and derive meaning from information; and the drive to connect with other human beings. Integrated thinking allows each of these forces to act effectively and productively on an individual or organization. When an individual is conscious of the need to set goals using all of his/her sensory abilities, skills, experience, reasoning and language, that individual is more likely to recognize the patterns internally and externally that support that outcome. S/he has a template for success. The forces that both keep us together and energize us move most effectively through the channels created by integration.

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OBSERVING CHANGE WHILE CONNECTING

Connections are dynamic: as one person moves or shifts, the other moves or shifts, sometimes matching and sometimes mismatching. Is the connection staying strong through these changes? NLP teaches the art of calibration: noticing the relationship between a particular physiology (expression, posture, breathing etc.) and a particular state of being. When you calibrate someone, you test their physiology when thinking of particular states, and then notice when they approach that state.



Subtle changes in physiology signal changes in state

Play a Calibration Game

Do this with a friend. One person is the actor, the other is the observer who calibrates. The actor thinks of a time s/he was critical, and imaginatively recreates that state. The observer coaches him/her with words like “See what you saw. Hear what you heard. Feel what you felt.” After the actor has fully experienced the state, s/he shakes it off. Then, the actor thinks of a time s/he was playful, and imaginatively recreates that state. After the actor has fully experienced the state, s/he shakes it off. The actor chooses one of the two states and enters into it. The interviewer calibrates the actor and then identifies which state s/he has entered. The subject then reveals the state to verify or contradict the observer. Repeat the process several times, then switch roles.

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THREE WAYS TO BETTER CONNECTIONS FASTER

Cross Mirroring: Using Rhythmic Gestures to Connect

Cross mirroring means using one part of the body or one action to mirror or echo a different body part or action. For instance, you could tap a finger when someone taps a foot or blink when someone inhales. Cross mirroring a rhythmic gesture has the effect of synchronizing your physiological rhythms with those of the person you are mirroring. It is a very subtle way of establishing connection.

Offering Back: Repeating Precisely the Words You Have Heard

A simple and extremely effective way of forging a connection during conversation is simply to offer back precisely the same words that have been said to you. While you may have heard that there are advantages to paraphrasing, offering back exact words establishes that you have been paying close attention and allows you to inconspicuously mirror vocal qualities like rhythm, tone, pitch and pronunciation. When you offer back a phrase or portion of what has been said, you are also able to pick up particular aspects of the conversation without taking apparent leadership.

The Two Most Effective Words for Making a Connection

Two words kill a connection instantly: they are “yes but.” As soon as you hear someone say “yes, but” you know that no agreement is likely to exist, and that you might not have been heard at all. You can easily avoid this conversation killer by training yourself to say instead, “yes, and.” While “yes, and” is often less logical, it is always better for making and maintaining connections. “Yes, and” says “I have met you in your ideas and now I invite you to meet me in mine.” It also encourages others to think more about what they have said themselves, and creates momentum for discovering the ideas that connect with both of you.

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FIVE TIPS FOR CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS AND COWORKERS

Rapid Connections Turn Prospects into Clients

How quickly do you notice that someone wants to do business with you? You may think that you need to work through a mental checklist before you know that you have made a connection that will work for you. Studies show, however, that people can make judgments within seconds that are as accurate as those they make after much longer contact.

Judgments made within the first seconds depend on the fact that human beings are hardwired to connect with one another. We have special centres in our brains just to interpret facial expression; other parts of our brain work to bring us into sync when we want to connect with other people. Without a moment of conscious thought, we can compare what we see, hear and feel in the presence of a new person to our entire experience of other people.

Just as we practice other skills that we use without conscious thought (for example, typing or riding a bike), we can practice noticing people who want to connect with us. Try this: before you make the next phone call, think of someone you really enjoy working with. Imagine that voice at the other end of the line and allow yourself to listen carefully to all its qualities. Notice the pace, the rhythm, the tone, the pitch, the pauses.

As you dial the phone, tell yourself that you will notice similar qualities in the voice that answers. Then simply carry on with your call. If appropriate, you will find yourself responding to the prospect in the same way that you respond to your favourite client: you will have noticed the similarities in their voices and adjusted your own behaviour without giving it any further thought.

What difference will it make when you notice that the prospect you are calling wants to be your client?

Moving to the Same Beat

How easy is it to move to the same beat as your clients? All human beings have built in routines to help put them in sync when they connect with others. Just a little polish on what you do naturally will allow you to rapidly match the pace of breathing, blinking, speaking or movement.

We all have many different rhythms: we blink and breathe, speak and move, and even think in waves that have different frequencies. When we engage in a connection with someone else (a conversation, for instance), we naturally perceive their rhythm and make the changes that bring us into synchronization. That means that two people who are connecting really well will find themselves talking at the same pace and may even find that they blink at the same time!

You can create this feeling of being in sync intentionally. One easy and subtle way to is to notice when someone blinks and match a rhythmic action to that (you can blink, tap your finger or pen, or twitch slightly). Another way is to pick up the beat of someone's speech and echo it with a small movement of your hand or foot.

Some people will have internal rhythms that are much slower than yours; others may be less regular. Just as human beings have created many kinds of drumming and dance, we have many different rhythms encoded in our neurologies. Sharing a beat feels good: it tells us that we can move easily together.

Enjoy moving to the same rhythm as your clients.

Learn how your clients listen

How can you know when someone is listening to you? Have you been taught to watch for eye contact? To notice when they are paraphrasing your words? Do you expect people to sit still when they pay attention? Each of these is something we are taught to expect. And each is misleading.

The easiest way to check whether people are listening to you has nothing to do with words: when you have good nonverbal rapport, you can make a gesture or change your posture and notice if they do the same. If they do, you are in rapport and they are connecting with your full communication (the combination of what you say and how you say it).

People have a wide range of preference for “paying attention.” Some handle information by connecting it to their physical experience; some like to listen to the sound of what is being said; others make such strong internal pictures that they look glassy-eyed.

Watch children in order to notice how movement can be tied to attention. There are little boys who squirm and fidget precisely because they are so involved with what they are hearing that they are integrating it into their physical experience. These boys can either sit still or pay attention: they are not equipped to do both at the same time.

If you have good rapport, people will be listening to what you say in the way that works best for them. Some will look you in the eye; others will turn their ears towards you. Some will echo precisely what you have said and others will paraphrase.

Do not learn rules to judge your effectiveness. Learn to develop great rapport and trust it.

“Yes and” leads to better connections

Think about a time you poured out your carefully reasoned explanation and someone said to you “yes, but. . .” How did that feel? It is said in many circles that “but” cancels out everything that comes before it. If the first part of a sentence indicates agreement, “but” cancels that connection.

There is a simple way to avoid making other people feel that you have cancelled out your agreement with them. Whenever you are tempted to say “yes, but” say “yes, and” instead. “Yes and” is a technique promoted in improv courses to indicate: “I accept your direction AND I am going to suggest this next.”

The success of “yes and” grows from the willingness to sacrifice the need to win an argument through logic. You can make sense and you can maintain the connection if you use “yes, and” to change direction without breaking stride. “But” signals that you are in a kind of competition; “and” says that there is room for both you and your client within the paradigm you offer.

There are many different ways to say “yes, and.” In some, the yes signals genuine agreement and the “and” signals next steps. In others, the “yes” signals simply that you have listened, and the “and” takes the conversation in a direction you hope will move back to genuine agreement.

It is hard to argue with someone who is agreeing with us. “Yes, and” allows you to agree to be connected even when you cannot agree to the logic of what has just been said. Through your connection, you have an opportunity for influence that will bring both you and your client back to common ground. And you will both feel better as a result.

Know when it is time for a change

What do you do when a conversation begins to go in circles? It happens to us all now and then. The pattern we have developed turns into a rut.

When you find that you and your client are moving in the wrong direction or caught in circular thinking, you can maintain your sense of purpose and cheerfully change the pace. When you are clear on what you want to accomplish, it is relatively easy to refocus.

Surprises change the pace. They can be as simple as an unexpected connection: “that reminds me of. . . .” followed by a story that is completely unrelated to the previous conversation. If you use something from current events, you won’t have to worry about becoming one of those people who tell the same joke every time you see them.

Other easy ways to interrupt the flow of a conversation to allow for new direction and energy include: open or adjust the window coverings; pour water or coffee; “remember” to shut off your cell phone or pager (do not take a call or make a call; that breaks rapport); comment on a draft or the temperature. You can be funny and creative but it is not essential.

Pattern interrupts are an easy way to break out of a rut and move forward. Essentially, anything that surprises you out of the same old arguments is a pattern interrupt. Whether you drop your pen, notice something of interest outside the window, or suddenly turn the conversation in a new direction, you will have ended one pattern and be ready to begin a more useful one.

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COMING FULL-CIRCLE: NOTICING CHANGE

Is change fast or slow? In just a few hours, you have connected with a variety of people and ideas. As you play the circle game again, you have more subtle ways to build connections and more detailed awareness of the connections you are building. You can modify your breathing and blinking and make use of seemingly casual gestures to show that you want to connect with someone and to build the rapport that makes connections happen.

Courses in neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) offer participants the opportunity to connect better with others and with themselves. We cannot not change; we understand that success depends not on staying the same but on liking the changes that happen in us and around us. We like change when we have developed good outcomes and notice the way that change is supporting our movement towards them. We like change when the change we facilitate in others supports both their outcomes and our own.

How do you know that it is possible to set outcomes and notice the changes that will move you toward them? NLP is a set of practices based first and foremost on what has already worked for you. It does not teach you to be different; it teaches you to be the self you have been at your best, the self that you want to be more often in the future. It is based on what is known of neurology; on the hard science that suggests that wiring experience into more parts of the brain provides a better grasp of the experience and a healthier brain. It is based on the observation of models who have achieved excellent results in facilitating change in themselves and others.

As you think about the changes ahead for you and the outcomes you most want to achieve, think about the skills, strengths and strategies that you want to develop or stabilize. Think about your belief that change can be healthy, positive, and directed. Think about who you want to be three months from now and three years from now. Then take the steps that allow you to set workable outcomes, make strong and effective connections, and move forward with all the enthusiasm and energy you would bring to a favourite game.