



N L P C A N A D A T R A I N I N G I N C .



THE EVOLUTION OF NLP

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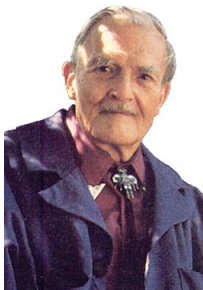
The Evolution of NLP

In the beginning

No movement in human thought or action really begins: we are all influenced by the thought and actions of the people who come before us. This is especially true of what would become known as NLP (even most practitioners find neurolinguistic programming a misnomer and a mouthful). In one sense, NLP began when Richard Bandler asked John Grinder to help him model his successful practice of Gestalt therapy. In another, the roots of NLP can be traced back before these founding fathers to the work of three particularly independent thinkers.

Noam Chomsky, Gregory Bateson and Milton Erickson worked in different disciplines and different parts of the country. Chomsky was a linguist, Bateson a sociologist and Erickson a psychiatrist. All three were maverick thinkers: although they participated in the academic establishment, they pursued ways of thinking that were on the margins of accepted thought and practice. Each also had particular expertise in understanding the way in which language interacts with experience - an interest that put them outside the bounds of both pure art and pure science.

The genetic material of NLP includes a definite tendency to find the limits of a structure by stepping outside them.



Milton Erickson



Gregory Bateson



Noam Chomsky

When Richard Bandler met John Grinder

It's the early seventies (probably 1974). John Grinder has already moved from a military career (which may have included covert operations) through a doctorate in linguistics and has a contract appointment at the University of California Santa Cruz. Richard Bandler has moved from mathematics to psychology; he has edited a book on the work of Fritz Perls and is already familiar with Virginia Satir. Bandler asks Grinder to observe him as he leads a group with the aim of identifying a model of his behaviour that can be used to teach others to get the results he is getting. Grinder agrees, observes and is able to successfully replicate the behaviours. The set of practices and presuppositions that will become known as NLP is born.

These are not conventional thinkers: they are men who are less interested in convention (and conventional morality) than they are in stretching the boundaries of what they can think, understand and do. Therapy is their subject matter but their passion is for the way attitudes and behaviours are transferred from one person to another. This leads to their practices of modeling (observing a behaviour, precisely identifying its component parts and replicating it) and influence which includes but is not limited to therapeutic change. Nothing is as simple as it seems

In many accounts of the six or seven years that followed, it seems that the primary question asked was: "Does it work?" That is and is not accurate. It seems to be true that Grinder and Bandler were interested in knowing what worked: they wanted to replicate results. It is also not a coincidence that their first conclusions of what was "working" was a book on language patterns that made liberal use of Chomsky's theory of transformational grammar. In many ways, *The Structure of Magic* is very much the product of young academics: it draws on the work of an existing authority and applies it in a new context. Although Grinder and Bandler were influenced at this point by highly individualistic thinkers, their own thought is less revolutionary than is often portrayed (by both fans and critics).

Later, Grinder would argue that the book oversimplified the "coding" of the model by artificially separating language from the non-verbal elements of communication on which language depends for effective communication. This is precisely the error one would predict from thinkers writing their "rookie" book together. And, as writers and performers in many fields have found, early success is as much a curse as a blessing. Grinder and Bandler were marked out by this success as brilliant observers rather than brilliant thinkers. Their work was too unconventional to gain institutional support and too academic to gain widespread commercial success. To this day, the debates that result from this problematic status rage on at conferences, in print, and on the internet.

An overview of classic code NLP

In the years when Bandler and Grinder were working together, they developed methods for modeling - for accurately observing, identifying and replicating the verbal and non-verbal acts that made up the methods of three therapists: Fritz Perls (modeled by videotape); Virginia Satir and Milton Erickson. The results of their work became known as classic code NLP.

Classic code NLP taught people to focus on their 'maps' of experience - maps which could be their sensory representations of an experience (including the different characteristics associated with different senses in that experience or memory) or their verbal maps (which were presumed to filter experience through generalization, deletion or distortion so that it would fit into the limits of language). All experience of language combined verbal and non-verbal representations; becoming aware of these representations allowed someone to alter them. Although the "map is not the territory," people were assumed to have access only to the "map" of experience and so changing the elements of the map also changed the experience. In other words, if you could persuade yourself to consciously alter the way you represented an experience, you could change the impact that experience had in your life.

None of this was particularly new: among many, many others, Dale Carnegie had posed the advantages of positive thinking in his 1936 book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" and Norman Vincent Peale had published "The Power of Positive Thinking" in 1952. The brilliant innovation was the recognition that "positive" might mean different things to different people. The key was to produce individual maps of a positive experience (often called a resource) and to use those maps to transform other experiences. This was not true with either language or non-verbal communication: it was true of both at once. Changing the experience would change the language associated with it; changing the language would be more effective if it also involved changing the non-verbal representation of the experience.

Maps of relationships were the correspondences in physiology that occurred between people making a positive connection. They were the non-verbal elements of rapport: matching expressions, rhythms, gestures and physiology in order to present a map of relationship which would then become an experience of relationship (although no connection between the neurologies of different individuals was possible within the model).

Key presuppositions of classic code NLP:

- The maps we create of our experience are manifest in our physiology as expressions, gestures and language. Close observation of those manifestations can allow someone to access and replicate our models or behaviours.
- All experiences are memories. Since we do not directly experience the world (we experience our internal representations of the world), by the time we experience something it is already past. Since all experience is past, we can access and change memories of experiences in order to change our future responses to similar situations.
- When we change our map of an experience, we change the meaning it carries for us.
- We can change the maps of our experience by paying attention to our sensory and linguistic representations and then altering components of those representations.
- We can transfer resources from one experience to another by imposing the elements of the map of the experience we identify as resourceful into other experiences or memories of experience.
- The map of an experience is the total combination of one's sensory and linguistic representations of that experience. As a result, any physical stimulus that is part of that map can be used to access the entire experience. A physical stimulus that occurs at the same time as the peak of an experience becomes part of that experience. This physical stimulus is called an anchor: it stabilizes the experience so that it can be accessed and transformed. Anchors can be set naturally or deliberately.
- Every experience is related to other experiences. We can change what an experience means by "reframing" the representation of that experience within a new context.
- The meaning of communication is the response it gets. Communication is the act of transferring experience from one person to another through a complex combination of verbal and nonverbal communication. The only way to evaluate communication is to notice what has been transferred as it is manifest in feedback.
- Modeling is the learning process by which replicating exactly the behaviours and representations of a person leads to producing the same results as that person.

Key challenges to Classic Code NLP

- The unconscious mind remains a spectator to the process of change. Change is initiated and carried out by systematic conscious process. Although the effects modeled depend on unconscious processes, the methods rely on the manipulation of experience through conscious process.
- Mind and body are treated as two parts of a system rather than as a single system. The mapping of our experience is presumed to be different than the “experience” itself.
- NLP is not a science and has not been “proven” scientifically. There are two basic reasons for this. The first is that the founders were not interested in conventional scientific process. The second is that the primary study of NLP is attention and until recently there were no accurate ways to study attention as a scientific phenomena. Science studies things that can be studied scientifically (most often, phenomena that occur in the world as it is studied by physics). The brain can be studied scientifically; attention could not be studied with the tools available to twentieth century researchers.

Classic Code Practices

mapping states

non-verbal rapport

VAK representation systems

Eye patterns and other accessing cues

Modeling through observation

the Meta Model of language patterns, including deletion, distortion & generalization

the Milton Model of “artfully vague” language

the Swish pattern

Anchoring

Collapsing “anchors”

Reframing

Dissociation

The Community Develops, then Divides

For a period of approximately six years, Grinder and Bandler developed different aspects of what became known as Classic Code NLP. They also attracted a community of like-minded people eager to explore and exploit the practices as they were developed. Many of these people remain involved in NLP or related activities to the present. They include (but are not limited to) David Gordon, Stephen Gilligan, Robert Dilts, Judy Delozier, Leslie Cameron and Connie Rae and Steve Andreas. For a number of reasons, none of which pertain to the purpose of this paper, Bandler and Grinder eventually ended their partnership, and the members of the community went separate ways.

Since the community dissolved, there has been no consensus about what NLP is or does or should do. Different practices have been developed, modified, or simply given new names and used by many different figures with varying interests and qualifications. The practices of classic code NLP, based on the conscious manipulation of states in the self and in others, have most commonly been popularized and are frequently revisited in popular self-help books and motivational seminars and speeches.

Combined with the lack of a formal, academic base for NLP, the divided community presents a challenge for practitioners interested in establishing community standards for training and ethics and a challenge for the consumer of training. The NLP world is mostly unregulated either by outside authorities or by a community of peers. The information published is not typically peer-reviewed, and the information that proliferates tends to be best-marketed rather than best-practices.

The Development of New Code NLP

In the mid-1980s, ten years after the beginnings of NLP, Judy Delozier and John Grinder were married to each other and collaborators in training and developing new practices in NLP. In an article called "The Sins of the Fathers" published on Grinder's current website (www.whisperinginthewind.com), Grinder and his current partner, Carmen Bostic St. Clair, present their version of the development of the practices now known as New Code. Essentially, New Code moves NLP closer to Ericksonian hypnosis with a renewed emphasis on the resources of the unconscious mind. The results are a curious application of scientific-sounding language to describe what is essentially a metaphoric construct (there is no unconscious mind in the world that can be explored or proven through biology, physics or chemistry). Grinder re-

mains a brilliant observer of what actually works: the practices are effective in broadening perspectives, accelerating learning, and facilitating change. They are also resilient and flexible. All of this effectiveness comes at a cost: relying on unconscious uptake, unconscious decision-making, and unconscious communication leaves the processes with serious gaps in accountability.

The gaps in conscious accountability and explanation do not necessarily mean that the practices of New Code are less ecological or ethical than other therapeutic or coaching methods. In fact, Grinder says that concern for ecology is specifically a reason for developing practices that ask the unconscious mind to run more complicated tests for the ecology of outcomes or change than the conscious mind will typically enact. What is missing may be the ability to consciously test for the accuracy and intention of various interventions. There is an inherent paradox in creating an epistemology (a theory of knowing) that relies heavily on the creation of a “know nothing” state.

How does New Code work?

The fullest description of how New Code effects positive change is found in the works of John Grinder, including **Turtles All the Way Down** (co-authored with Judith Delozier) and **Whispering in the Wind** (co-authored with Carmen Bostic St. Clair). In brief, New Code includes a set of practices for setting congruent outcomes, a set of practices for personal change which are called personal edits, and a set of practices for accelerated learning. Each of these relies heavily on the capability of a practitioner to speak directly to the unconscious mind of a client, and to accurately notice (calibrate) the physiological signals which the unconscious mind uses to communicate its responses.

While the calibration of states taught as part of New Code can seem almost magical, it is actually a conscious heightening of innate human skills that could be compared to the way coaching can enable someone to run faster or jump higher than would otherwise be possible. Human infants can recognize faces: this achievement is still almost impossible for computers. Human beings use and recognize universal facial expressions for basic emotions. All human beings calibrate states in other human beings through a variety of innate systems which include attention to faces, walks, and vocal characteristics. The practices taught in New Code draw conscious attention to this ability in order that it may be practiced with attention and accuracy.

Outcome formation in New Code

New code practices for outcome formation rely heavily on the ability of unconscious process to both determine what is desirable and to check that outcomes are acceptable within the entire ecology of goals, values and characteristics that comprise the self. In a number of exercises, from the Six Step Reframe to the organization of the self (through a metaphor of demons responsible for different skills or activities), the conscious mind is enlisted only insofar as it agrees to enter trance. The active participation of conscious intention in forming goals is neither necessary nor desirable within the model. In some instances, the conscious mind remains out of the loop indefinitely: the unconscious mind is not obligated to communicate in consciousness and the practitioner is able to work without content to facilitate unconscious process without knowing either its alternatives or its objectives.

It's entirely possible that the processes work best under these conditions; however, it is impossible to prove since what has been achieved remains unknowable to the subject and the practitioner. The ecology checks embedded in the process ensure that outcomes are set into appropriate contexts and are not contrary to the beliefs and values held by the unconscious mind. Presumably, conscious agreement is not necessary to ensure the ecology of a system of which it forms only a small part.

Where we have evidence, the process is more inclusive and less risky than other forms of goal-setting. It takes advantage of metaphors of groups and ecologies in order to represent the true complexity of human decision-making within the world and within time. It recognizes, as do current neuroscience and many forms of psychology and philosophy, that much of what constitutes decision-making is the result of unconscious processes, and avoids the attribution errors that the conscious mind typically makes about cause and effect. Where we can trace results, the processes represent an effective way of provoking actions that move towards goals.

Personal Edits

Personal edits are games designed, as Grinder says in "The Sins of the Fathers," to allow the client to develop 'a high performance state. . . that is then connected (through a version of future pacing - an extremely effective deployment of anchoring) with the context in which the client desires that the change occur.'" In other words, the client identifies a desired outcome and codes it in sensory representations. S/he then develops a resourceful state and anchors it to this future situation in which s/he will need the resources in order to perform optimally. This involves identifying the situation or situations which would lead to less than optimal performance

(called “choice points”) and using games to first dissociate from the states associated with those situations, then scramble internal representations of those states. Often the representations are scrambled using physical movement in combination with a ‘story’ or metaphor that changes the language and images attached to the situation. Resources are accessed and added (in part through the guidance of the practitioner), and the new representation is tied to the desired outcome.

In other words, the practitioner and client collaborate to “edit” the learning that the client takes from a particular situation. Like the editor of a film or book, they cannot change the content of the situation; they can change the perspective from which it is viewed, and the tone and atmosphere with which it presents itself to the conscious mind. They rely on the unconscious mind to select, present and anchor resources that are uniquely suited to resolve difficulties and move toward achievements. Throughout, while the ‘imagination’ of the client is engaged in making pictures or sounds suitable to the game, the ‘rational’ faculties are relaxed and distracted, in part by the need to guide the body through physical activity. The result is that all parts of the mind are engaged simultaneously and focused on turning a situation previously identified as undesirable into a step on the road to a desired outcome.

Calibration and Perceptual Positions

In the NLP New Code model of learning, unconscious competence precedes conscious competence. This means that people can unconsciously replicate behaviours before they are consciously aware of what they are doing. A naturally occurring example of this often happens on the dance floor: for many people, it is easier to watch a step and then do it than to think it through. Once they are able to do the step consistently, they become aware of the components and sequence required. This overturns conventional models of learning in which conscious competence (knowing how to do something) generally precedes unconscious competence (being able to do it without thinking about it).

This model demonstrates the presupposition that the unconscious mind always has faster, more accurate and more complete access to information about other people than the conscious mind can access. As neuroscience develops, a significant body of knowledge is becoming available about how precisely this is true. Recent technologies allow scientists an increasingly clear view of how many different neurological centres and systems have evolved specifically to allow human beings to learn from one another’s experiences. This evolution includes all forms of influence, both those that have been associated with education and those which have been associated with persuasion.

A set of practices in New Code NLP develops the ability to notice and rely on “signals” - physiological or sensory phenomena that represent the complex response of the unconscious mind to people, thoughts or situations. Calibration is the ability to notice difference and assign meaning to it. In calibration games, people become more aware both of how other people represent internal states through subtle physiological changes and of how their own signals allow them to respond to such signals whether or not they have been conscious of noticing them. These games are a way of training what has often been called “instinct” - the capacity to respond quickly and accurately to complex stimuli. This ability to instantly access good information is the subject of Malcolm Gladwell’s recent best-seller, **blink**.

In NLP New Code, calibration relies on instinct and moves beyond it to the imaginative apprehension of another person’s experience, including that person’s physiology, point of view, and emotional state. It works from the presupposition that it is possible to imaginatively collate the multiple streams of information about another person’s experience so that it becomes possible to see oneself through another’s eyes (and ears and kinaesthetics). In language, the activity of mapping someone else’s experience is represented by the second person: you. In NLP New Code, practitioners work from the physiology of another person and their own unconscious collection of relevant information to gain insight into what and how someone is experiencing or behaving. A second position shift moves attention from one’s own experience to the experience of someone else, as if the practitioner had become that person.

There are two levels of ecology check necessary in a second position shift: both involve necessary caution in noticing and maintaining the distinction between one’s own experience and that of the other person. On the one hand, it is possible to notice too little and simply attribute one’s own experience to the other person. On the other hand, it is possible to take on characteristics or points of view which threaten one’s own sense of integrity or purpose. As with all close observation, it is possible to learn more than someone would consciously wish to share: this is a consequence of the power of human evolution and not the power of NLP New Code. As one learns to access accurate perceptions, one can also choose not to access those perceptions.

Third position is the position that allows perception of oneself and another in relationship. Sometimes inaccurately described as the “objective observer” position, it is more likely to represent what language creates as the ‘first person plural’ - the self in relationship with at least one other. What is perceived from third position is not one’s experience or the experience of someone else, but the impact that each individual has on the connection or relationship between

them. Third position begins from the “fly on the wall” description of the objective observer. It develops into a more complicated experience of oneself as part of a relationship or system.

Modeling, Learning & Influence

Modeling is the perception of how someone else does a behaviour, organizes information, or creates a particular state in him/herself or others. The purpose of modeling can be either to “learn” that behaviour, organization or strategy so that one can replicate it, or to discover leverage points which will allow change in the model. Within the model of New Code NLP, it is necessary to consciously model (not to consciously understand) others before one can influence them. Learning is therefore a prerequisite for influence.

The fastest way to acquire new behaviours is to locate someone capable of those behaviours and model him/her as precisely as possible. This means observing and replicating the physiology of behaviours and, insofar as they can be accessed, the thoughts that accompany those behaviours. The modeling process means replicating all aspects of a behaviour, and then gradually eliminating components that prove unnecessary to produce a more elegant model.

Influence involves the same process: calibration and multiple perceptual positions are used to create a model of the other person’s experience and that model allows one to create rapport (a sense of connection and relationship) and then shift elements of the model to effect change. The strategies and conscious manipulation of classic code NLP are largely replaced by a reliance on unconscious process to carry out the steps necessary to effect a conscious intention for a relationship (whether that intention is learning or influence). In essence, the fine distinctions employed by classic code practitioners are now relegated to unconscious process until it become useful to be aware of them. Instead, attention is now focused on signals that represent whole states and the movement between them.

Key Presuppositions of New Code NLP

- The unconscious mind is almost infinitely more resourceful than the conscious mind and represents the true “self” of a person who is capable of setting outcomes and directing change.
- Every person has the resources they need to solve the problem of which they are conscious. Problems are only available to the conscious mind when people have the resources they need to solve them.
- The conscious mind can ask the unconscious mind to spontaneously generate new choices, and to evaluate the ecology of these choices.
- The unconscious mind can communicate through physiological signals. Effective communication takes place when the conscious mind of one person is able to notice and correctly interpret the signals of the unconscious mind of another person. All true rapport and most communication takes place on the unconscious level.
- The representation of experience can be altered by “games” that move information across the hemispheres, include “stories” of analogous situations, or use physical metaphors to represent transformations. These games are called personal edits. They reflect the ability of the unconscious mind to make necessary adjustments while the conscious representation of experience is confused.
- Human experience includes the perspective of the self (called first position), the perceptions of the other (called second position); and the perception of the self in relation to the other (called third position). Generating new choices involves the ability to imagine assuming all three perceptual positions. This is called triple description.
- Confusion is a learning state. It is not only possible but optimal to learn a behaviour before understanding it. Unconscious competence precedes conscious competence in optimal learning.

Key Challenges to New Code NLP

- There are issues of accountability: if I am not consciously aware of what I want, how will I know when I get it? How will I know the process works? Can involve a general disregard for the strengths of conscious process.
- It is associated with “new age” spirituality and practices and therefore suspect.
- Depends on understanding the unity of states of experience in a way that treats the unconscious and conscious responses of the body as “thinking” and therefore threatens some common paradigms of reasoning.
- Cannot be effectively tested scientifically much less “proven.”

New Code Practices

calibration of states

choice points

the six step reframe

personal edits

second and third position shifts

triple description

“stop the world” and other states of not knowing

use of metaphor to inspire or direct change

may include Dilt’s “logical levels” (i.e. The Human Face of Change)

Answering the question: what does NLP teach?

NLP has been called an epistemology - a way of knowing what you know. That does not adequately describe practitioners’ experience of the way that NLP influences their ability to imagine, define and achieve particular goals and outcomes. A better definition is functional: NLP is a set of practices for thinking that impacts behaviours and experience. It is thinking for people who want to take effective action and be satisfied with the results they achieve.

Thinking for impact in the world involves working simultaneously in two directions. People are minds in bodies: in order to take action, they must be able to coordinate the information they receive through their bodies (senses and physiology) with the more abstract information generated by their minds (critical analysis, memory and imagination). NLP practices provides ways for ensuring that all parts of the individual are able to work in collaboration. They preserve the ecology of the self, so that the overall system is not sacrificed in order to achieve benefits (for instance, so that health is not sacrificed in order to achieve abstract goals).

People are minds in bodies: this also means that they exist in environments and form parts of complex systems which include other people. NLP recognizes that most human goals involve cooperation or relationship with other people. It teaches people ways to connect better, faster and more ecologically. It allows individuals to maintain integrity within relationships.

Put another way, NLP teaches integrated thinking: the ability to pay attention to component parts and to the system itself. This thinking applies to the individual person who is a collection of multiple systems working together. It also applies to the individual person as one component of the human and ecological systems in which s/he lives and functions. Integrated thinking allows one to build strength in both the system and its component parts.

What is metaphor and how does it lead to effective change?

Integrated thinking is often metaphorical thinking. In its most basic form, metaphors use physical reality to describe abstract concepts. Metaphors turn thoughts into things that can be perceived through the senses and relate physical objects to emotions, reason, and imagination. We say that we are moving up in the world or we experience a sinking feeling. We know instantly that the first is a way of saying something good is happening and the second represents a sense that something is wrong. Metaphorical thinking is the primary way in which human beings express the connectedness of mind and body.

All metaphor is integrated thinking, the ability to recognize the distinct contributions of mind and body and the way they work together in one individual. In fact, our bodies often serve as real metaphors for our sense of identity. We get headaches when it is hard for us to hear our own voice through the noise of competing demands, and we “embrace” the ideas we like. Leaders in all fields recognize that their “gut instincts” represent a complex apprehension of many dimensions of a situation. They rely on their “gut” to tell them when to take action.

Artists have always been metaphorical thinkers, moving easily between the world of imagination and the world of the senses. Scientists use metaphorical thinking to uncover relationships and extend thought in new directions. Because metaphor moves meaning from one area of reference to another, it leads the way to both integration and transformation. Business leaders are often referenced as “storytellers” who engage and motivate through the qualities of metaphor they use in language and communicate through language, the workplace and branding. They also use metaphorical thinking to identify threats and opportunities and to transfer success in one market to new markets.

Integrated thinking for effective language

Originally, the founders of NLP proposed that language provided more generalized (and distorted) alternatives to the knowledge of the world provided by the senses. A better understanding now suggests that language is the pre-eminent tool for integration. It gives physical form (as signs or words) to thought and it provides a meeting place where different individuals can con-

tribute to a single understanding of a situation or concept. Integrated thinking means thinking about how language creates opportunities for collaboration between two or more individuals in the service of tangible goals.

Goals are often generated through unconscious process: they are discovered in an “aha!” moment and stabilized through language so that they can be realized. Once given form by language, the components and implications of unconscious decisions can be understood and manipulated. Since those unconscious processes represent the strength of many “thought” processes acting continuously and simultaneously, they bring into being the strongest possible response to a given situation.

Language is more than this: it is also the tool by which people work together to create shared purpose and shared meaning. It is the medium through which the integration of many different minds occurs, and it gives a stable form to agreement and rapport. The purpose of language is not to represent but to integrate - it works best when it allows for interaction and mutual influence.

Integrated thinking about language allows us to appreciate how the best response to any situation involves the collaboration of different parts of one individual, and the collaboration of different individuals. When all possible resources of a number of individuals are brought together through language, the results respect individual integrity and allows systems to perform optimally.

Moving ahead through integrated thinking

Integrated thinking is the natural mode of thought of successful individuals. These individuals move continually between attention and intention, between the information they have and the action they want to take. The components of attention are sensory perceptions and imagination (the ability to think about things that are not actually present, whether creatively or analytically). These are combined and stabilized in language (also called voice). When attention is stabilized in this way, intention can be either pursued or refined. This is true of individuals and it is true of groups led by strong leadership.

Intention, imagination, sensory experience and language provide the necessary components for progress. Alone, they provide alternatives to existence. When they are integrated into one stream of perception and action, they allow individuals to make changes in themselves and their circumstances. Integrated thinking allows strong minds to make their intentions real. It is thinking for achievement.

Integrated Thinking Principles

- There are four different elements that comprise human thought: intention; sensory experience; imagination and language.
- Attention (sensory experience and imagination) and intention interact in thinking and its consequences.
- We have evolved to think in relationship to other people. Thinking produces the best results when language is used to enable people to think together: to produce thoughts together that no one individual would have generated alone.
- Language is most useful when it provides a channel to combine multiple, diverse thoughts. In the individual, language combines sensory perception of what is present or has been present with the imagined perception of what has never been present.
- NLP practices are effective because they provide a process for using all four elements of thought in forming and carrying out an intention.
- The human brain has no “off” switch. Human beings have evolved to continuously process information and to bring it into conscious awareness when it is helpful to do so. Human beings can count on themselves to have access to the information they want and need.
- Most often, the person with the clearest intention has the best access to sensory information, imagination and voice. Knowing what you want makes you more likely to achieve what you want.

Integrated Thinking Practices

- continual, disciplined and resolute noticing and processing of what is desirable
- using past states in order to set goals for future states, even when moving into unknown territory
- believing that two heads really are better than one, and that multiple perspectives from multiple people are always better than one
- actign as if the truth resides in the connections between people and not in any one statement or any one mind
- focusing on integrity: the ability to sustain a desired identity through change and challenge and the ability to support integrity in others.

Why is it worth learning and practicing?

One cannot avoid integrated thinking any more than one can avoid eating or sleeping or breathing. All are natural human functions. All can be done better or worse depending on one's attention, circumstances and goals. Athletes and singers learn new ways to breathe. Whole industries have developed to explore what it means to eat well, and to give people more choices about how and when they sleep. The fact that integrated thinking is a natural function means that doing it better can make a difference throughout one's life. Natural functions are key leverage points for defining who and how we are.

Increasing amounts of scientific evidence support the work of philosophers, theologians and artists through centuries. Human beings are meant to connect with one another: we are not using our full potential unless we are functioning in relationship with other human beings. We benefit from other perspectives on what we want and what we do. We learn best and perform best in the company of others. Training in integrated thinking, like physical training, is best conducted regularly, in the company of others who are training, and under the guidance of someone who is willing to take responsibility for the process while you take responsibility for its content.

Integrated thinking, including elements of NLP, New Code NLP and Ericksonian hypnosis, represents a way of thinking modeled on people who generate choices for themselves. Some are recognized for creativity, some for "great people skills," some for influencing change in others and some for remarkable individual performance. All of them hold themselves accountable for choosing their responses to what life hands them. They take responsibility for deciding what they want and creating opportunities for achieving it.

Training in integrated thinking is useful for people who want to make choices, to collaborate with others, and to turn thinking into doing. It may provide new techniques and insights. It will always provide the opportunity to become aware of one's strengths, to focus on what one wants, to use patterns of previous success to generate maps for new achievement. It will affirm the value of defining what you want in terms of ecological relationships within oneself and with other people.

Training in integrated thinking allows individuals and teams to become aware of their strategies for success, to refine those strategies for greater effectiveness, and to apply them more often.