NLP – a practical philosophy of being

Joanna Taylor discusses Neuro-Linguistic programming

The language of the mind to consistently achieve our specific and desired outcomes. It is a practical philosophy of being.

Did they hear what you said, or what they think you meant? We’ve all had the experience of having somebody take something we said the wrong way. The meaning of communication is the response you get from the other person; people will respond to what they think you said – which is sometimes not what you actually meant! Because we all think differently, we will perceive others’ communications in different ways. The NLP Communication Model can help us appreciate how our unconscious mind filters our experiences through our personal internal values, beliefs and memories; so that effectively we all construct our own idea of what reality means to us.

As we listen to others, noticing language patterns, body language and voice tonality, we can gain insights into how they are processing their own experiences, which can help us discover how best to communicate with them. As the founder of NLP, John Grinder, said, “Once you understand a patient’s values, it’s possible to use that knowledge to increase their motivation; for example in oral hygiene compliance.”

As we listen, the patient’s “model of the world”, pay attention to what is important to them and how they are constructing their reality, we can make a real difference to the quality of our communication and develop a solid, long-term relationship which is based on respect and understanding.

We already have all the resources we need

NLP has been described as “a practical philosophy of being” – hence the title of this article. We operate most effectively when we are in a resourceful state; utilising the philosophy of NLP can help us access our inner positive resources and operate from a “physiology and psychology of excellence”.

As human beings, we have a tendency to believe what we see, and see what we believe; consider – how many times in the past have you “known” something would go wrong with a particular patient, and proved yourself right? What if, instead, you “know” as an unwanted interruption in their Facebook time, but if you can discover something that is important to them (for example a forthcoming job or university interview) then you can use this information to “reframe” their approach to oral hygiene. This is another example of respecting someone’s “model of the world”, however – it won’t work if you are using your own values of what you believe they should think is important!

As we listen, respect the patient’s “model of the world”, pay attention to what is important to them and how they are constructing their reality, we can make a real difference to the quality of our communication and develop a solid, long-term relationship which is based on respect and understanding.

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Every behaviour has a positive intention. All our actions and behaviours have at least one purpose – to achieve something that we value and that benefits us in some way. Even a behaviour which others perceive to be manifestly antisocial, such as bullying another staff member, will have a positive intention of some sort for the person doing the behaviour. NLP separates the intention behind a behaviour from the behaviour itself, and asks for what purpose is the behaviour there? For example, a suggestion for treatment may actually be afraid, but unable to verbalise that feeling. If we can understand how and for what purpose someone is behaving in a particular way, it is possible to work with them to assist them to change their behaviour into something more useful or desirable. We are not our behaviours; when we have a better choice of behaviour that also achieves that same overall positive intention, we will take it.

People are doing the best they can. In any given situation, we will do the best we can at the time with what resources we have available to us. How often have you said to yourself, “If I’d known back then what I know now...” The resource of that knowledge was not available to you at that time, so whatever you did back then was done from a positive intention, with the expectation of a particular outcome, and with what resources you did have at the time. A nervous patient may actually be afraid, but unable to verbalise that feeling. If we can understand how and for what purpose someone is behaving in a particular way, it is possible to work with them to assist them to change their behaviour into something more useful or desirable. We are not our behaviours; when we have a better choice of behaviour that also achieves that same overall positive intention, we will take it.

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