

NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

# NLP

# WORKBOOK

JOSEPH O'CONNOR

*a practical  
guide to  
achieving  
the results  
you want*

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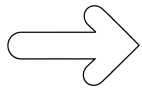
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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the NLP workbook. This is the most comprehensive guide to Neuro-Linguistic Programming available. It has all the main material to practitioner level as well as many exercises, suggestions and resources that go further. It is called a 'workbook' because it is practical – it works, you can change yourself and your world with the ideas and techniques here. It is not a workbook in the sense of hard work – NLP is remarkably easy, intuitive and entertaining.

NLP is about your experience – how you know the world and everyone in it, how you do what you do, how you create your own reality, with its heights and depths. I hope this book will tell you how to see, hear and feel more of the world, to know yourself better and to understand others more clearly. If you already have some knowledge of NLP, then this book will be an invaluable resource to integrate what you know, give you some new ideas and some new exercises.

This book started life as the manual for my NLP practitioner course. I have rearranged, changed, added, subtracted and transformed that manual to make it into this book. In doing so, I hope I have kept most of the clarity and conciseness of the original.

The book is arranged in several sections, each covering a topic in depth, and the final section explains how it all fits together and what techniques and ideas to use in what situation. NLP can be rather like a magic toolbox. Marvelling at the wonderful things inside, you ask yourself, 'Where can I use this?' This book will answer that question. There is also a final section on how to create your own tools, so you can add to the box yourself.

## **How to Use This Book**

NLP is like a hologram, you can start anywhere and build the whole picture, so you can dip into this book at random and read what interests you. If you read it through in

order, though, I believe you will get a better looking, easier to understand hologram.

If you are a trainer, you will find many ideas in this book for NLP training. You will also find many ideas you can adapt for any kind of communication or self-development skills training.

At the end of each section, there is an 'Action Plan' with practical exercises and suggestions for building your skills and making the ideas reality. Knowledge, as they say, remains only a rumour until you embody it and do something with it. These are exercises for everyday life. They are not a regimented formula – they don't have to be completed before you can read the next page – and I would be kidding myself if I expected everyone to do them all. They are suggestions. Take the ones that you like and that work for you.

You may want to use this book more creatively, for example like the Chinese divination book the *I Ching*. When you have a problem and would appreciate some advice, open the book at random and read a page. How might it apply? There is bound to be some application, as both the problem and the meaning you take from what you read come from the same place – your mind.

Above all, be curious. This book is about the endlessly fascinating webs of our experience. Some days are wonderful. We can do no wrong and neither can anyone else. Other days are awful. Everyone seems to conspire to thwart us and we can do nothing right. If we tried to fall over, the odds are we would miss the floor. How does this all happen? NLP can begin to tell you how and even a little of why. Then perhaps you can make your way through each day with a little more choice, a little less burdened by the excess baggage of old limitations.



## WHAT IS NLP?

⇒ ⇒ ⇒ First things first. What is NLP? But this is a trick question. You cannot pin NLP down to a single definition. There are many explanations of NLP, each like a beam of light shining from a different angle, picking out the whole shape and shadow of the subject.

NLP studies brilliance and quality – how outstanding individuals and organizations get their outstanding results. The methods can be taught to others so they too can get the same class of results. This process is called ‘modelling’.

In order to model, NLP studies how we structure our subjective experience – how we think about our values and beliefs and how we create our emotional states – and how we construct our internal world from our experience and give it meaning. No event has meaning in itself, we give it meaning, and different people may give the same event different meanings. So, NLP studies experience from the inside.

NLP began by studying the best communicators and has evolved into the systemic study of human communication. It has grown by adding practical tools and methods generated by modelling exceptional people. These tools are used internationally in sports, business, training, sales, law and education. However, NLP is more than just a collection of techniques. It is also a way of thinking, a frame of mind based on curiosity, exploration and fun.

The name ‘Neuro-Linguistic Programming’ comes from the three areas it brings together:

N	Neurology	The mind and how we think.
L	Linguistics	How we use language and how it affects us.
P	Programming	How we sequence our actions to achieve our goals.

Here are some definitions of NLP. Put them all together and they give a good idea of the field.

- ↓ 'NLP is the study of the structure of subjective experience.'
- ↓ 'NLP is an accelerated learning strategy for the detection and utilization of patterns in the world.' (John Grinder)
- ↓ 'NLP is the epistemology of returning to what we have lost – a state of grace.' (John Grinder)
- ↓ 'NLP is whatever works.' (Robert Dilts)
- ↓ 'NLP is an attitude and a methodology, which leave behind a trail of techniques.' (Richard Bandler)
- ↓ 'NLP is the influence of language on our mind and subsequent behaviour.'
- ↓ 'NLP is the systemic study of human communication.' (Alix Von Uhde)
- ↓ 'NLP is the method for modelling excellence so it can be duplicated.'

And now for two stories – always a richer source of ideas than a straight definition...

*A boy asked his mother, 'What's NLP?'*

*His mother said, 'I will tell you in a moment, but first you have to do something so you can understand. See your granddad over there in his chair?'*

*'Yep,' said the boy.*

*'Go and ask him how his arthritis is today.'*

*The boy went over to his grandfather. 'Granddad,' he said, 'how's your arthritis today?'*

*'Oh, it's a bit bad, son,' replied the old man. 'It's always worse in damp weather. I can hardly move my fingers today.' A look of pain crossed his face.*

*The boy went back to his mother. 'He said it was bad. I think it hurts him. Are you going to tell me what NLP is now?'*

*'In a minute, I promise,' replied his mother. 'Now go over and ask Granddad what was the funniest thing that you did when you were very young.'*

*The boy went over to his grandfather. 'Granddad,' he began, 'what's the funniest thing I ever did when I was very young?'*

*The old man's face lit up. 'Oh,' he smiled, 'there were lots of things. There was the time when you and your friend played Father Christmas and sprinkled talcum powder all over the bathroom pretending it was snow. I laughed – but I didn't have to clean it up.' He stared into the distance with a smile.*

*'Then there was the time I took you out for a walk. It was a lovely day and you were singing a nursery rhyme you had just learned. Loudly. A man went past and gave you a nasty look. He thought you were being too noisy. He asked me to tell you to be quiet. You turned round and said to him, "If you don't like me singing, you can go and boil your head." And carried on even louder...' The old man chuckled.*

*The boy went back to his mother. 'Did you hear what Granddad said?' he asked.*

*'Yes,' his mother replied. 'You changed how he felt with a few words. That's NLP'*

*A wise man rode into a desert village one evening as the sun was setting. Dismounting from his camel, he asked one of the villagers for a drink of water.*

*'Of course,' said the villager and gave him a cup of water.*

*The traveller drank the whole cupful. 'Thank you,' he said. 'Can I help you at all before I travel on?'*

*'Yes,' said the young man. 'We have a dispute in our family. I am the youngest of three brothers. Our father died recently, God rest his soul, and all he possessed was a small herd of camels. Seventeen, to be exact. He decreed in his will that one half of the herd was to go to my oldest brother, one third to the middle brother and one ninth to me. But how can we divide a herd of 17? We do not want to chop up any camels, they are worth far more alive.'*

*'Take me to your house,' said the sage.*

*When he entered the house he saw the other two brothers and the man's widow sitting around the fire arguing. The youngest brother interrupted them and introduced the traveller.*

*'Wait,' said the wise man, 'I think I can help you. Here, I give you my camel as a gift. Now you have 18 camels. One half goes to the eldest, that's nine camels. One third goes to the middle son, that's six camels. And one ninth goes to my friend here, the youngest son. That's two.'*

*'That's only 17 altogether,' said the youngest son.*

*'Yes. By a happy coincidence, the camel left over is the one I gave to you. If you could possibly give it back to me, I will continue on my journey.'*

*And he did.*

How is NLP like the eighteenth camel? It could be that it is brought into the situation by a wise man, solves the problem quickly and then disappears as if it had never been there.

## THE PILLARS OF NLP



NLP has six basic principles. They are known as 'the pillars of NLP'.

I You – your emotional state and level of skill

You are the most important part of any NLP intervention. You make NLP real by what

you do. Just as a tool can be used to create beautiful art or rubbish, so NLP can be used well or badly. Your success depends on how resourceful and skilful you are. The more congruent you are, the more successful you will be. Congruence is when your goals, beliefs and values align with your actions and words, when you 'walk your talk and talk your walk'.

2 *The presuppositions – the principles of NLP*

The presuppositions of NLP are its guiding principles, those ideas or beliefs that are presupposed, that is, taken for granted and acted upon.

3 *Rapport – the quality of relationship*

Rapport is the quality of relationship that results in mutual trust and responsiveness. You gain rapport by understanding and respecting the way another person sees the world. It is like speaking their language. Rapport is essential for good communication. If you have rapport, others will feel acknowledged and immediately be more responsive. It is possible to build rapport at many levels, but all involve paying attention to and respecting the other person. Rapport can be built instantly and rapport over time evolves into trust.

4 *Outcome – knowing what you want*

A basic skill of NLP is being clear about what you want and being able to elicit from others what they want. NLP is based around always thinking of outcomes in every situation, so you are always acting in a purposeful way. An outcome is what you want; a task is what you do to achieve it.

Outcome thinking has basic three elements:

Know your present situation – where you are now.

Know your desired situation – where you want to be.

Plan your strategy – how to get from one to the other, using the resources you have or creating new ones.

5 *Feedback – how will you know you are getting what you want?*

Once you know what you want, you have to pay attention to what you are getting, so you know what to do next. What are you paying attention to? Is your feedback both precise and accurate? Most of the time this means paying keen attention to your senses – looking at, listening to and feeling what is actually happening. Your senses are the only way you have of getting direct feedback. You have only your senses to 'make sense' of the world. The information you get from your senses lets you know whether you are on course for your goal.

6 *Flexibility – if what you are doing is not working, then do something else*

When you know what you want and you know what you are getting, the more strategies you have to achieve your outcome, the greater your chance of success. The more choices you have – of emotional state, communication style and perspective – the better your results. NLP encourages choice governed by purpose in a relationship of rapport and awareness.



## THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF NLP



The 13 presuppositions are the central principles of NLP, its guiding philosophy, its 'beliefs'. These principles are not claimed to be true or universal. You do not have to believe they are true. They are called 'presuppositions' because you *pre-suppose* them to be true and then act as if they were. Basically, they form a set of ethical principles for life.

1 *People respond to their experience, not to reality itself.*

We do not know what reality is. Our senses, beliefs and past experience give us a map of the world from which to operate, but a map can never be completely accurate, otherwise it would be the same as the ground it covers. We do not know the territory, so for us, the map is the territory. Some maps are better than others for finding your way around. We navigate life like a ship through a dangerous area of sea; as long as the map shows the main hazards, we will be fine. When maps are faulty, we are in danger of running aground. NLP is the art of changing these maps so we have greater freedom of action.

2 *Having a choice is better than not having a choice.*

Always try to have a map that gives you the widest number of choices. Always act to increase choice. The more choices you have, the freer you are and the more influence you have.

3 *People make the best choice they can at the time.*

A person always makes the best choice they can, given their map of the world. The choice may be self-defeating, bizarre or evil, but for them, it seems the best way forward. Give them a better choice and they will take it. Even better, give them a superior map with more choices on it.

4 *People work perfectly.*

No one is wrong or broken. We are all executing our strategies perfectly, but the strategies may be poorly designed and ineffective. Find out how you and others operate, so a strategy can be changed to something more useful and desirable.

5 *All actions have a purpose.*

Our actions are not random; we are always trying to achieve something, although we may not be aware of what that is.

6 *Every behaviour has a positive intention.*

All our actions have at least one purpose – to achieve something that we value and that benefits us. NLP separates the intention behind an action from the action itself. A person is not their behaviour. When a person has a better choice of behaviour that also achieves their positive intention, they will take it.

7 *The unconscious mind balances the conscious; it is not malicious.*

The unconscious is everything that is not in consciousness at the present moment. It contains all the resources we need to live in balance.

- 8 *The meaning of the communication is not simply what you intend, but also the response you get.*  
This response may be different from the one you wanted, but there are no failures in communication, only responses and feedback. If you are not getting the result you want, change what you are doing. Take responsibility for the communication.
- 9 *We already have all the resources we need or we can create them.*  
There are no unresourceful people, only unresourceful states of mind.
- 10 *Mind and body form a system. They are different expressions of the one person.*  
Mind and body interact and influence each other. It is not possible to make a change in one without the other being affected. When we think differently, our bodies change. When we act differently, we change our thoughts and feelings.
- 11 *We process all information through our senses.*  
Developing your senses so they become more acute gives you better information and helps you think more clearly.
- 12 *Modelling successful performance leads to excellence.*  
If one person can do something, it is possible to model it and teach it to others. In this way everyone can learn to get better results in their own way. You do not become a clone of the person you are modelling – you learn from them.
- 13 *If you want to understand, act.*  
The learning is in the doing.

## WHAT DOES NLP DO?



NLP brings about self-development and change. First you use it to work on yourself to become the person you really want to be and can be. Also, you work on yourself so that you can effectively help others.

I do a lot of air travel and at the beginning of every flight, when you have sat down and put your seat belt on, the staff have you at their mercy and they go through the safety procedures. At this point the frequent fliers bury themselves in the in-flight magazine, because they have heard it all before and some of them could recite it by heart. But I always remember one thing about those safety procedures – if the cabin loses pressure, oxygen masks drop down and you should put them on before helping anyone else. Why? Because if you don't put your own mask on, you could pass out and then you are no good to anyone – yourself or another person.

Self-development is the equivalent to putting your own mask on first. The more you know about yourself, the more you are able to help others.

*NLP is not about fixing other people and neglecting yourself.  
Put your own mask on first!*

When you approach change and self-development, you need to be congruent, in other words you need to be determined to succeed and believe in what you are doing. Congruence means that you are committed to making the change, so that you do not sabotage yourself.

Secondly, you need to establish rapport, in other words work within a relationship of trust and mutual influence.

Thirdly, you need to establish what you want to achieve in that change.

Then you can apply one of the many patterns, techniques or combinations of patterns that NLP has developed for change and learning.

Your result must be ecological, so it fits into the wider picture without any unfortunate consequences for yourself or others.

Lastly, you 'future pace', that is, you mentally rehearse the new change and learning. This reinforces it and means that you will remember to act differently when the time comes to test what you have learned.

## ECOLOGY



Ecology is a concern for the overall system. An ecology check is when you consider how the change you are making fits into the wider system. You check that what looks like a good change in one part of a system does not cause problems in other areas. Many personal and organizational changes fail because the system boundary is drawn too narrowly and the 'side-effects' turn out to be major headaches. An ecology check is like checking a drug for bad side-effects even if it cures the illness.

As part of an NLP technique, an ecology check ensures that NLP does not become manipulative, that your actions do not lead to your gain and another person's loss. You also check that the change another person makes harmonizes with the rest of their life and relationships. An ecology check for yourself ensures that you do not manipulate *yourself*, forcing yourself into some course of action that you will come to regret later or that will hurt another person badly.

All actions have consequences beyond their specific context. Our lives are complex and a change will ripple out like a stone dropped into a still pool. Some changes make stronger ripples than others. Some ripples will wash away; some may disturb the surface far more than you thought. A few may even become tidal waves.

### Internal Ecology

An internal ecology check is when you check with your own feelings that a course of action would be a wise one to follow. The ecology of your physical body is shown in

your physical health. Your mental ecology is shown by your feelings of congruence or incongruence.

Incongruence is the feeling that the change has consequences that are uncertain (so you need more information), or are negative (so you need to think again). Incongruence is not bad, but you need to be aware of it and explore why you are feeling it.

For an internal ecology check the questions you need to ask are:

‘What are the wider consequences of my action?’

‘What will I lose if I make this change?’

‘What extra will I have to do?’

‘Is it worth it?’

‘What will I gain if I make this change?’

‘What is the price of making this change and am I willing to pay it?’

‘What are the good aspects of the present state?’

‘How can I keep those good aspects while making the change I want?’

Listen, feel and look carefully for your answers.

A typical incongruent response will be an uneasy feeling, usually in the stomach. A visual incongruence is often a sense of the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle not making sense. The classic incongruent phrase is ‘Yes, *but...*’

Sometimes when you do an ecology check, the unpleasant consequences may be very clear and you may need to rethink your outcome. Other times you may get an intuition that all is not well without being able to say exactly why. This intuition is an unconscious indication that the change is not completely ecological. Always pay attention to your intuitions and feelings of incongruence.

## External Ecology

Internal ecology shades into external ecology because we are all part of a wider system of relationships. Internal and external ecology are two different perspectives on the same system. An external ecology check examines how your outcome will affect other significant people in your life.

Make a leap of the imagination and become them.

How will your change affect them?

Does it go against any of their values?

Does this matter?

How will they react?

Ecology checks are part of systemic thinking. Optimizing one part of a system invariably leads to the *whole* system working *less* well than it did. For example, suppose a man

decides to lose weight and get fit in a moment of madness on New Year's Eve. He takes up squash and goes to the gym three times a week, thinking that the more he does, the better it will be. Because his body is unused to the effort, he pulls a muscle and becomes tired and lethargic. Then he can't exercise, becomes depressed, does even less and may end up even less active and even heavier than he was at the year's end, and with a bill for physiotherapy and a subscription to a gym that he has hardly used as well.

Ecology is important in organizations too. A big sales push may result in a leap in sales that puts pressure on the manufacturers to meet the demand. If they are unable to deliver, this will lead to more dissatisfied customers, a rise in customer complaints and a subsequent loss of business.

## CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS MIND



*All change takes place first at the unconscious level.  
Then we become aware of it.*

NLP has a characteristic approach to the conscious and unconscious that is different from most other systems of psychology. In NLP 'the conscious' refers to everything that is in present moment awareness. We can hold about seven separate pieces of information consciously at any time. However, a lot depends on how we organize the information. A telephone number may consist of seven digits. You can memorize that as seven digits, but once you take it as a telephone number and remember it as one whole 'chunk', then you can store seven or so telephone numbers in your short-term memory.

'The unconscious' is used in NLP to indicate everything that is not conscious. So the unconscious is a 'container' for many different thoughts, feelings, emotions, resources and possibilities that you are not paying attention to at any given time. When you switch your attention, they will become conscious.

Some beliefs and values remain unconscious but guide your life without you ever realizing how powerful they are. Some parts of your physiology will always remain unconscious – the carbon dioxide concentration in the blood, how your heart beats, what your liver is doing. The more important and life-sustaining the function, the more likely it is to be unconscious. It would be very awkward if you had to remember consciously to make your heart beat, regulate your digestion or make your bones regenerate.

The conscious mind is like the rider of a horse, steering and guiding, setting outcomes and deciding directions. These then pass into the unconscious and we start to take actions to achieve them. The unconscious is like the horse that actually does the work in getting to where the rider wants. It is not a good idea to let the horse set the direction. Nor

is it a good idea for the rider to try to tell the horse exactly where to put its feet at every stage of the journey. At best, conscious and unconscious form a balanced partnership.

Everyone has all the resources they need to change, or they can create them. However, people often think they do not have the resources because they are not conscious of them in the particular context where they need them. But some neurophysiological research suggests that it is possible that every experience we ever have is stored somewhere and can be accessed under the right circumstances. We have all had the experience of long-forgotten events popping into our minds, triggered by some stray thought, and unconscious resources can be utilized by hypnotherapy and trance.

Some systems of psychology (e.g. psychoanalysis) view the unconscious as a repository of repressed, disruptive material. NLP considers the unconscious to be benevolent – as it has all the experiences that we could use to gain wisdom.

NLP has a healthy respect for the unconscious. The easiest place to start, however, is with the conscious – what we are aware of and how we direct our lives, formulating, understanding and achieving our outcomes.



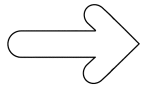
## ACTION PLAN

- 1 Pick one of the NLP presuppositions that appeals to you. Now think of a problem or difficult situation you have with another person. What would you do if you were to act as if that presupposition were true? How would the situation change?**

**As a simple example, a friend of mine was part of a work project team. One member of the team was driving him crazy by continually voicing objections, getting into details too soon and wasting time (in my friend's opinion). The presupposition that came to mind was that people work perfectly. His colleague had an excellent strategy for sorting and making sense of information, but he was applying it in the wrong place. Keeping the presupposition in mind helped my friend understand his colleague, be patient with him, keep rapport and help him to ask his questions in a different way at a different time, when they were extremely valuable.**

- 2 Now pick the presupposition that you have the greatest doubts about. Take another difficult situation in your life. What would you do if you acted as if that presupposition were true? How would the situation change?**
- 3 Watch the film *The Matrix* on video. If you have already seen it, watch it again. If you were the protagonist in the film, would you have taken the blue or the red pill? And how do you know you are not in a Matrix 'for real'?**





## OUTCOMES

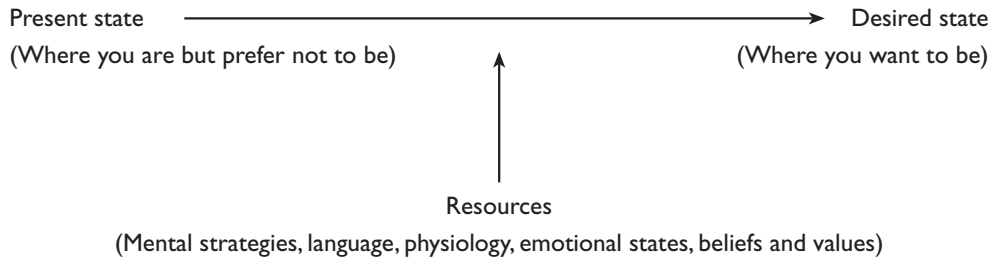
⇒ ⇒ ⇒ What do you want? This is the definitive question in NLP. An outcome is what you want – a desired state, something you don't have in your present state. Outcomes 'come out' when we achieve them, hence the name, and the first step towards achieving them is to think them through carefully. Why you want your outcome and whether you should want it are questions that need an answer. NLP outcomes are different from targets, goals and objectives because they have been carefully considered and meet certain conditions that make them realistic, motivating and achievable.

By setting an outcome we become aware of the difference between what we have and what we want. This difference is the 'problem'. When you have set an outcome and are clear about your desired state, then you can plan to make the journey from one to the other. You become proactive, take ownership of the problem and start to move towards a solution. When you do not know what you want, there are many people who are only too delighted to set you to work getting *their* outcomes.

An outcome is not the same as a task. An outcome is what you want. A task is what you have to do to achieve it. Don't do tasks until you set your outcomes.

*Problems cannot be solved unless you have an outcome.*

Change is a journey from an unsatisfactory present state towards a desired state – your outcome. You use various resources to help you make the journey.



### NLP basic change

There are four basic questions you need to ask to make this journey successfully:

- ↓ What am I moving towards? *(The desired state or outcome)*
- ↓ Why am I moving? *(The values that guide you)*
- ↓ How will I get there? *(The strategy for the journey)*
- ↓ What if something goes wrong? *(Risk management and contingency planning)*

## THINKING IN OUTCOMES



There are two aspects to outcomes:

- ↓ *Outcome thinking* – deciding what you want in a given situation.
- ↓ *Outcome orientation* – consistently thinking in outcomes and having a general direction and purpose in life. Until you know what you want, what you do will be aimless and your results will be random. Outcome orientation gives you control over the direction in which you travel. You need it in your personal life and it is essential in business.

The opposite of outcome thinking is ‘problem thinking’. Problem thinking focuses on what is wrong. Our society is caught up in problem thinking. We notice what is wrong and the next step is allocating blame, as if bad things only happen because people make them happen deliberately. This seems especially true in politics. Many people get lost in a labyrinth of problems, finding out their history, cost and consequences, asking questions like:

‘What’s wrong?’

‘How long has it gone on for?’



‘When did it start?’

‘Whose fault is it?’

‘Why haven’t you solved it yet?’

These questions focus on the past or present. They are also guaranteed to make you feel worse about the problem because they really push your nose in it.

Problems are difficult because the very act of thinking about them makes us feel bad and therefore less resourceful. We do not think as clearly, so it is harder to think of a solution.

*Problem thinking makes the problem even harder to solve.*

It is much more useful to think about problems in terms of contribution and ask:

‘What was the other person’s contribution towards that problem?’

‘What was my contribution towards the problem?’

‘How did those contributions add up to the problem?’

These questions lead us in a more useful direction: what do we want instead and what are we going to do about it?

## HOW TO STRUCTURE OUTCOMES



There are nine questions you need to ask when working with outcomes. These are known as ‘the well-formed conditions’. When you have thought them through, then your outcome will be realistic, achievable and motivating. These conditions apply best to individual outcomes.

### 1 Positive: What do you want?

Outcomes are expressed in the positive. This is nothing to do with ‘positive thinking’ or ‘positive’ in the sense of being good for you. Positive here means ‘directed towards something you want’ rather than ‘away from something you wish to avoid’.

So, ask, ‘What do I want?’ not, ‘What do I not want, or want to avoid?’

For example, losing weight and giving up smoking are negative outcomes, which may partly explain why they are hard to achieve. Reducing waste, reducing fixed costs and losing fewer key staff are also negative outcomes.

How do you turn a negative into a positive outcome? By asking: ‘What do I want instead?’ and ‘What will this do for me?’

For example, if you want to reduce your debt, you can set the outcome to improve your cash flow.

2 *Evidence: How will you know you are succeeding/have succeeded?*

It is important to know you are on track for your outcome. You need the right feedback in the right quantity and it needs to be accurate. When you set an outcome you must think how you will measure the progress and with what degree of precision.

There are two kinds of evidence:

1 Feedback as you progress towards the outcome. How will you know you are on track?

2 Evidence for having achieved the outcome. How will you know that you have got it?

Ask:

‘How will I know that I am on course towards my outcome? What am I going to measure?’

‘How will I know when I have achieved this outcome? What will I see, hear or feel?’

3 *Specifics: Where, when and with whom?*

Where do you want the outcome? Where specifically? There may be places and situations where you do not want it. You may want to increase productivity, but only in certain departments. You may want to buy a house, but not if interest rates rise beyond a certain point.

When do you want it? You may need to meet a deadline or you may not want the outcome before a specific date, because other elements would not be in place to take advantage of it. Ask:

‘Where specifically do I want this?’

‘When specifically do I want this?’

‘In what context do I want this?’

4 *Resources: What resources do you have?*

List your resources. They will fall into five categories, some more relevant than others, depending on your outcome:

↓ *Objects.* Examples would be office equipment, buildings and technology. There may be books you can read, television and video programmes you can see, tapes you can listen to.

↓ *People.* For example, family, friends, acquaintances, your business colleagues, other business contacts.

↓ *Role models.* Do you know anyone who has already succeeded in getting the outcome? Whom can you talk to? Has someone written about their experience?

↓ *Personal qualities.* What qualities do you have or need to develop to achieve the outcome? Think of all your personal skills and capabilities.

↓ *Money.* Do you have enough? Can you raise enough?

5 *Control: Can you start and maintain this outcome?*

How much is under your direct control? What can you do and what do others have to do to get this outcome? Who will help you? How can you motivate them to actually want to help you rather than feeling they have to help you? Ask:

‘What can I do directly to get this outcome?’

‘How can I persuade others to help me? What can I offer them that will make them want to help?’

6 *Ecology: What are the wider consequences?*

Here are some wider systemic questions to consider:

- ↓ What time and effort will this outcome need? Everything has an ‘opportunity cost’. Spending time and effort on one thing leaves others neglected.
- ↓ Who else is affected and how will they feel? Take different perspectives. In your business life consider your boss, your customers, your suppliers and the people you manage. In your personal life consider your spouse, your friends and your children. When you think about the ecology of the outcome, you may want to change it or think of a different way to get it.
- ↓ What will you have to give up when you achieve this outcome? It is said that you can have anything you want if you are prepared to pay for it (and not necessarily in money).
- ↓ What is good about the present situation? What do you want to keep? Losing valuable aspects of the present situation is the greatest cause of resistance to change both for individuals and organizations.
- ↓ What else could happen when you get your outcome? There are always secondary consequences and sometimes these become more of a problem than the initial situation. (King Midas’s golden touch comes to mind...)

7 *Identity: Is this outcome in keeping with who you are?*

You can apply this at both the individual and organizational level. First the individual level. Suppose you want to manage a project. Being involved with this project might mean a great deal of time away from home. It might mean dropping other projects. It might take you away from your main career path. Although you would like to be involved, on balance it just does not suit you. You might ask, ‘What does working on this project accomplish for me?’ If the answer is to gain valuable experience, then there may be other projects, or training and consulting might be preferable.

The same is true at the organizational level. Each company has a certain culture and a set of core values that define its identity. Company outcomes need to be aligned with this corporate self. Many companies come unstuck through diversifying into areas in which they are inexperienced and which do not fit their identity.

Many a company has a strong identity that is characteristic of its founder and this can work to its advantage. Richard Branson of Virgin started an airline, which was very different from his original music business, but he and Virgin are identified with innovation, so the move was profitable.

8 *How do your outcomes fit together?*

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

If the outcome is too large, list all the obstacles that prevent you from getting it and set smaller outcomes to get over these barriers. Ask, ‘What prevents me from achieving this outcome?’

When you are knee deep in crocodiles, it's hard to remember you went in to drain the swamp.

When the outcome is too small to be motivating and you feel bogged down with details, ask yourself, 'What does this small outcome get for me?' Connect the details to the larger, more motivating outcome of which it is part.

9 *Action plan: What to do next?*

Once you have put your plan through these questions, then you are ready to act, or perhaps delegate. When delegating in a business project, give your people the wider picture, so they can connect their tasks with the larger project. Make sure they know how to think outcomes through for themselves. This will ensure that their tasks are aligned with yours.

Remember the story of the two builders? Both were asked what they were doing. The first said, 'I'm laying bricks.' The second said, 'I'm building a wonderful building.'

Guess which builder was more motivated and worked better?

## HUGGS



Some outcomes are more important than others. I like to call the most important ones HUGGs (Huge, Unbelievably Great Goals). Not all the outcome conditions apply to HUGGs. They are large-scale outcomes and cannot be specified exactly.

HUGGs have the following qualities:

- ↓ They are long term (5–30 years).
- ↓ They are clear, compelling and easy to grasp.
- ↓ They connect with your identity and core values.
- ↓ You feel strongly about them. They engage your emotions – you feel good when you think about them.
- ↓ When you first set them, they seem impossible. As time goes on, they start to manifest more and more.
- ↓ They do not involve you sacrificing the present moment for a possible future, however good.

HUGGs can shape your life. Because they are long term and aligned with your core values, you will often achieve them in unpredictable, even paradoxical ways, or they will almost seem to 'fall into' your life like magic.

HUGGs often have an 'away from' element. If you do not achieve them, it hurts. This makes them more motivating. They often have an edge to them, too, like a deadline or set of conditions. For example, one friend of mine left his job to start a company

of his own. He gave himself five years to make it a success. If it did not work out, he would find another job in his old profession.

The most powerful HUGGs often involve *removing* elements from your life. Sometimes the biggest leverage comes not from doing things to achieve them, but from stopping doing things that are in your way.

Examples of HUGGs:

- ↓ become a published author
- ↓ establish your own successful company
- ↓ start a charitable foundation
- ↓ move to another country
- ↓ win a gold medal at the Olympic Games
- ↓ become a millionaire

*HUGGs are creative. They produce ongoing effects and they express your values. You create them, they are personal, you do not copy them from other people.*

Keep track of your goals and review them regularly. Reward yourself when you get them and enjoy those times. They are what you have worked for and you deserve them. Enjoy the achievement and enjoy the journey. Collect those moments like beautiful pictures for a photograph album or press cuttings in a scrapbook. Go back to them. Use them to motivate yourself in the future. Let them be a source of inspiration, learning and pleasure. Never be in a position to think, 'I've worked hard to get where I am ... Where am I?'

## BELIEFS



Beliefs are the rules we live by. They are our best guesses at reality and form our mental models – the principles of how the world seems to work, based on our experience. Beliefs are not facts, although we often mistake them for facts. We have beliefs about other people, about ourselves and about our relationships, about what is possible and about what we are capable of. We have a personal investment in our beliefs. 'I told you so' is a satisfying phrase because it means our beliefs were proved right. It gives us confidence in our ideas.

Some things are not influenced by our belief in them – the law of gravity, for example, will not change whether we believe in it or not. Sometimes we treat other beliefs – about our relationships, abilities and possibilities – as if they were as fixed and as immutable as gravity, and they are not. Beliefs actively *shape* our social world.

Beliefs act as self-fulfilling prophecies. They act as permissions as well as blocks to what we can do. If you believe you are not very likeable, it will make you act towards others in a way that may put them off and so confirm your belief, even though you do not want it to be true. If you believe you are likeable, then you will approach people more openly and they are more likely to confirm your belief.

*NLP treats beliefs as presuppositions, not as truth or facts.  
Beliefs create our social world.*

Treating beliefs as presuppositions means NLP treats beliefs as principles of conduct. You act *as if* they are true and if you like the results, then you continue to act as if they are true. If your beliefs do not bring good results, you change them. You have choice about what you believe – though the belief that beliefs are changeable is in itself a challenging belief to many people!

*Beliefs have to be acted on if they are to mean anything, therefore beliefs are principles of action, not empty ideals.*

## Beliefs and Outcomes

You need to believe three things about your outcomes:

It is *possible* to achieve them.

You are *able* to achieve them.

You *deserve* to achieve them.

*Possibility, Ability and Worthiness are the three keys to achievement. Remember them as the PAW Process.*

### Possibility

Very often we mistake possibility for competence. We think something is not possible when really we do not know how to do it. We all have physical limits, of course – we are human, not superheroes. But we do not usually know what these limits are. *You cannot know what they are until you reach them.*

You cannot prove a negative, therefore you can never prove that you are incapable of anything, you can only say that you have not achieved it *yet*. Once it was considered impossible for any human being to run a mile in less than four minutes – until Roger Bannister did it at Oxford on 6 May 1954. Then a strange thing happened – more and more athletes started running a mile in under four minutes. Today Roger Bannister's 'impossible' achievement is commonplace.

Do not be too quick to decide what is impossible.

## Ability

Have you put a mental ceiling on your achievements? We often sell ourselves short by not believing we can do something. But beliefs are not facts – they are just our best guess about how things are at the moment.

Have one basic, true belief: *You have not yet reached the limit of what you are capable.*

Keep an open mind. Do not ever announce to other people that you can't do something, even if you think you can't. Listen for a day or two and you will hear a string of admissions from people about what they cannot do. People will own up much more readily to what they are bad at than to what they are good at. Some people mistake this for modesty, but it is not. Modesty means not bragging about what you *can* do.

*Don't boast about your supposed limitations.*

Negative talk just wraps you in a straitjacket of imposed limitations. If you find yourself thinking like this, add the little word 'yet' to the end. Then you are being realistic.

Don't make excuses in advance or plead extenuating circumstances out loud, either. If you make an excuse in advance then you are going to need it! Take responsibility for your goals. There may be any number of good reasons why you do not get them, but if you make excuses in advance, then you have set yourself up for failure.

## Worthiness

Do you deserve to achieve your goals?

Only you can answer this question, but why not?

NLP does not judge whether goals are morally or ethically right, it simply gives you a process to help you achieve them. The ecology check will usually catch any moral or ethical dilemmas. Only you can decide how to resolve these dilemmas.

After you have worked on your goals with the well-formed conditions, put them through the PAW questions. Say for each goal:

'This goal is possible.'

'I have the ability to achieve this goal.'

'I deserve to achieve this goal.'

Notice any uncomfortable feelings. They will point to obstacles and self-doubts.

Now look for possible obstacles. What might stop you? Think to yourself, 'I will not achieve my goal because...' and then list all the possible reasons that come into your mind. These obstacles usually fall into five categories:

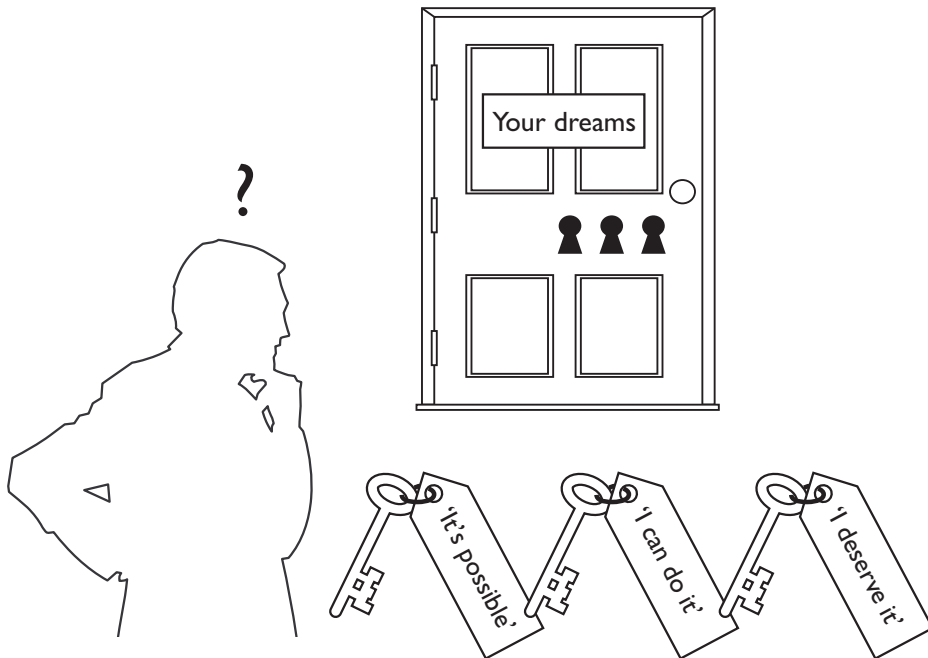
- 1 You don't have the resources – people, equipment, time and place.
- 2 You have the resources, but you don't know what to do.
- 3 You know what to do, but you do not believe you have the skill.
- 4 You have the skill, but it doesn't seem worth it.
- 5 It is worthwhile, but somehow it's 'just not you'.

Once you have the list of objections, decide how many of them are real obstacles and how many of them are your beliefs.

There are three possibilities:

- 1 There are real obstacles that make it impossible for you to achieve your goals.  
If this is so, then just drop the outcome. It's a waste of time to pursue it now, although circumstances may change.
- 2 They are real obstacles that you could get around if you devoted the time and effort to doing so.

### The keys to achievement





If this is so, then decide whether you want the goal enough to put in the time and effort. If you do, fine. If you do not, then drop the outcome.

- 3 They are beliefs about yourself or other people and you do not really know whether they are true.

If this is so, then think how you could test that belief. Does the obstacle only exist inside your head? How real is it? Once you have tested it, then it will fall into one of the first two categories.

This approach makes you responsible for your outcomes. You decide.

## Affirmations

Affirmations can help you achieve your goals. An affirmation is a pithy statement of your outcome that assumes that it is possible and achievable and keeps your mind focused on it.

Affirmations are like belief statements – they can be powerful, but they have to be carefully phrased. When you make affirmations that are about self-development, phrase them *as if they are occurring now*. For example, if your outcome is to become a more relaxed person, a suitable affirmation might be: ‘I am becoming more and more relaxed. I am feeling better and better about myself.’

Do not phrase self-development affirmations as if they have already happened, for example, ‘I am a more relaxed person. I feel better about myself.’ You are not – yet – and so your unconscious mind will whisper, ‘No, you’re not. You aren’t fooling anybody.’

Do not give self-development affirmations an exact deadline, for example, ‘In three months’ time I shall be a more relaxed person.’ First of all, it may take more or less than three months. Secondly, your unconscious mind will whisper, ‘OK, so we don’t need to do anything right now then, do we?’

Affirmations should only have specific time and date if they are about specific actions, for example, ‘On Monday 22 January I will go to the gym and exercise for one hour’ or ‘By this time next year I will have doubled my salary.’

‘Don’t just think it, ink it!’

Write down your outcomes. Write down your affirmations. Write them on good-quality paper in your best handwriting and say them several times every day. They will keep them in your mind and you will start to see opportunities that you would never see otherwise.

When you achieve them, put them away safely under the heading of ‘Success Stories’ and whenever you feel your confidence waning, dig them out and enjoy the feeling of achievement again.



## ACTION PLAN

- 1 **Sit down and write at least 10 outcomes that you want to achieve in the next week.**
- 2 **Write down your outcomes every six months. Have at least two in each of the following groups:**
  - ↓ professional life
  - ↓ personal health
  - ↓ relationships
  - ↓ money
  - ↓ self-development
  - ↓ spiritual life

List each one in as much detail as you wish. Keep this list where you can refer to it. At the end of six months, look over it and renew it for the next six months, replacing those outcomes that you have achieved with new ones.

Write them out carefully or do them on a word processor. Your unconscious mind will not put any value on poorly written goals on a scrappy piece of paper. So write them out as if they are very important. They are.

Do them as if they could change your life. They will.

- 3 **Write down three HUGGs.**
- 4 **Watch the film *The Shawshank Redemption* on video, even if you have seen it before. What was the key resource for the character played by Tim Robbins when he was in prison?**
- 5 **Listen for the times when you sell yourself short, boast about your failures or tell other people that you can't do something. They might believe it. Do you? During the course of one day count how many times you hear other people trying to convince you that they are incapable of something. Do you believe them?**

