

**POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE NEUROCOACHING
NEUROMINDS**

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ESSAY DESCRIPTION

In this assignment I will do a critical reflection on my learning in my NLP Practitioner course

January 2021

Word Count: 4,825

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“If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.”

Napoleon Hill

Introduction

In this assignment I will do a critical reflection on my learning from my NLP Practitioner course. To illustrate my learning, I will be using the Gibbs Reflection Model specifically in my case study.

In my Matrix file that will be submitted separately (Development plan_Matrix.docx), I will cover:

Why did I do the NLP Practitioner?

What goals and expectations I have for the NLP course?

How was I assessed?

How did I assess the training?

How did the learning take place?

What did happen after I finished the NLP training?

I will be focussing here on Goal setting, specifically the NLP method Well-formed Outcomes (WFO), as a method that had a significant impact on me personally and professionally.

In addition, I will cover NLP understandings of values and the Meta Model language model.

I will begin by providing context, which will include providing the NLP understandings of terms used.

I will use a case study¹ as my foundation to explore and reflect on some of the topics from my NLP Practitioner. What I mean by that, is that I will be using parts of the coaching session that I recorded (JM_Recording.m4a) and the transcription of this

¹Case study “A strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence”
Robson, (2002)

(JM_transcript.pdf), as the basis for reflection on how this and other core models have impacted my work and the achievement of goals as a professional Coach.

Context – background to the Models discussed

What is NLP – Neuro-Linguistic Programming?

Different schools define NLP differently. The definitions below reflect the multiple descriptions used to position NLP:

- 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.
- NLP is the epistemology of returning to what we have lost - a state of grace.
- NLP is an attitude and a methodology that leaves behind a trail of techniques.
- NLP is the influence of language on our mind and subsequent behaviour.
- NLP is the systematic study of human communication.
- NLP is the method for modelling excellence so it can be duplicated.

Wake, L. NLP – Principles in Practice (2008)

As a Trainer, I see the benefit of having multiple definitions is that eventually, everyone finds one that connects with them.

I believe NLP is a set of tools that helps to create a mindset for success, whatever that means for each of us. After my course, I had a shift on my own mindset, I started believing that the only way to know if something is possible, it is to try it, and after that, decide if it is possible or not. The stretch for me was to stop my internal dialogue, telling me that might not be possible.

How does NLP understand 'Values'?

Payne describes values as what are important to us. They are directly connected with how we spend our time. We tend to spend more time on things that are important to us, and when what we are doing is in alignment with our values, we feel good about that specific activity. When people feel uncomfortable about doing a specific activity, it may indicate a conflict of values. Payne, S. (2014), section 17, p1.

What is a 'Well Formed-Outcome'?

The NLP approach to goal-setting is contained in the Well Formed Outcomes strategy. This includes considering the following key points:

- 1 - What do you want? Stated in the positive
- 2 - Where are you now in relation to where you want to be? Specify the present situation.
- 3 - What will you see, hear, feel when you have achieved the goal? Be specific.
- 4 - How would you know when you have achieved the goal? What is the evidence?
- 5 - What will this goal allow you to do?
- 6 - Is it for you? Can you initiate and maintain the process of achieving your goal?
- 7 - Where, when, how, and with whom do you want it?
- 8 - Do you have everything you need to achieve this goal? E.g. resources, knowledge, time, etc.
- 9 - Is it in alignment with your values?

Payne, S. (2014), section 5, p6

Lazarus explains that there are three main reasons and benefits of goal setting:

1. Provision of a sense of direction
 - Know what we want
 - Know if we are moving toward the goal
 - Having flexibility to change direction if we are moving away from our goal
2. Focus of our energy and attention

- We live in a world of so many options that it is hard to focus. We can benefit from a step by step approach to prevent us from deviating from our goal.

3. Avoiding wasting time, effort, money and energy on the “wrong” goals

- Using the NLP goal setting techniques, we consider the implications of achieving our goals when setting them. That way we tend to set goals that are right for us.

Lazarus, J. (2011)

To contrast the Well-Formed Outcome to a goal-setting tool that is not informed by NLP theories, I will refer in this paper to the tool known as ‘SMART’.

SMART stands for:

S – Short, Specific, Simple

M – Measurable, Meaningful to you, More than one way to achieve

A – as if now (present tense), Achievable, All areas of your life

R – Realist, Responsible, Right for you

T – Time, Towards what you want

Payne, S. (2014), section 5, p7

The Meta Model

The founders of NLP, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, started by identifying the language patterns that Virginia Satir and Fritz Perls used with their clients that allowed them to ‘change the subjective experience, or map’.

Bandler, R. and Grinder, J. (1975)

The purpose of the Meta Model is to help people to recover some of the information that they had deleted, distorted, or generalised to create their current internal representations. There are ten patterns inside the Meta Model, all of them designed to retrieve information.

Here you can see a few examples of the use of the Meta Model:

- 1- "You don't like me" - Response – How do you know I don't like you?
- 2- "You make me so frustrated" – Response – "How does what I'm doing cause you to choose to feel frustrated?"
- 3- She looks at me in a funny way, she doesn't like me" – Response – How does her looking at you at that way means that she doesn't like you?"
- 4- "I'm very uncomfortable" – Response – About what / with whom?

Wake, L. (2016)

During the course, I benefitted from an exercise that required to challenge the information delivered in a Politician speech, it was mind blowing to realise how much vague information is feed to us without us realising. Since that I am aware of the information feed to me and what I decide to pay attention to.

Critical Reflection

What was the impact (real or potential) in application to my learning, work and achievement of my goals as Coach?

Personally, in my own ways of thinking, several months after I finished my NLP Practitioner, I became consciously aware of different behavioural patterns of in myself and others, that had previously been unconscious.

Here are a couple of examples of the consequences of me becoming aware of some of my behavioural patterns:

- I wasn't very good receiving feedback, after the training I became a better listener by giving space for other people to talk.
- I realised that my wife needed someone to talk, not someone to tell her what to do. It was an improvement in my relationship with my wife.

These changes were unintended positive benefits of studying the NLP Practitioner.

In my work as a Coach, since my NLP Practitioner I have been attending NLP practice groups, assisted in NLP Trainings with two different schools and accessed mentoring that has helped me to reflect on my use of NLP in my coaching practice. I also have a supervisor for my NLP and Coaching practice. Together I believe these activities enable my practice to be of a professional standard (as defined by the ANLP and ICF) and 'clean'. 'Clean practice' in NLP is a practice in which you strive to not bring your own beliefs and expectations to the client's session. For example, if I am coaching a father who is discussing his relationship with his daughter, I am conscious of the separation of my own beliefs as a father and my clients' beliefs.

Out of all the content from my NLP Practitioner course, one topic that had the most impact on my self-development, personal and work life, was the Well-Formed Outcome (a goal setting method). Outside of the course I have continued to use the Well-Formed Outcome structure for goal setting and I believe it has contributed to me becoming a professional coach and NLP Trainer.

Bolstad and Kurusheva Out-frames (2013) refer to a large study done by Richard Wiseman with five thousand people, those people had some significant goal they wanted to achieve (everything from starting a new relationship to beginning a new career, from stopping smoking to gaining a qualification). He followed them over the next year and found that only ten percent of them manage to achieve their goals. The study suggests that the ten percent manage to achieve their goal because they were using many aspects of the WFO and also visualization techniques. The ninety percent that didn't manage to achieve their goal, was in a negative mindset, focussing only on the things that could go wrong.

Bolstad, Kurusheva and Transformations International Consulting & Training, (2013)

I believe that the good thing about goal setting is that it has allowed me to consistently reach my goals, whereas previously I was frustrated as this was not the case. Before learning about Well Formed-Outcomes - WFO, I didn't have any kind of strategy, understanding about my goals and more importantly I never knew where I was in relation of achieving the goal. I didn't know how to measure the progress of achieving my goals. With the WFO strategy, I have a structure and steps that take me from where

I am in relation to my goal, all the way to achieving it. Of course, if I set an unrealistic goal, like going to the moon next Tuesday, that wouldn't be realistic and the tool wouldn't work, but everything else that is realistic for my current situation, I manage to achieve using this specific tool. I feel very congruent with the goal setting tool as it gives me direction, a way of measuring how close I am to my goals, the time needed and what to do if I start to deviate from it.

Next, I will use a case study approach to first describe some of the NLP tools that was covered in my NLP Practitioner, secondly, show how I use them with clients and personally and thirdly, to reflect on my learning from the application of these tools.

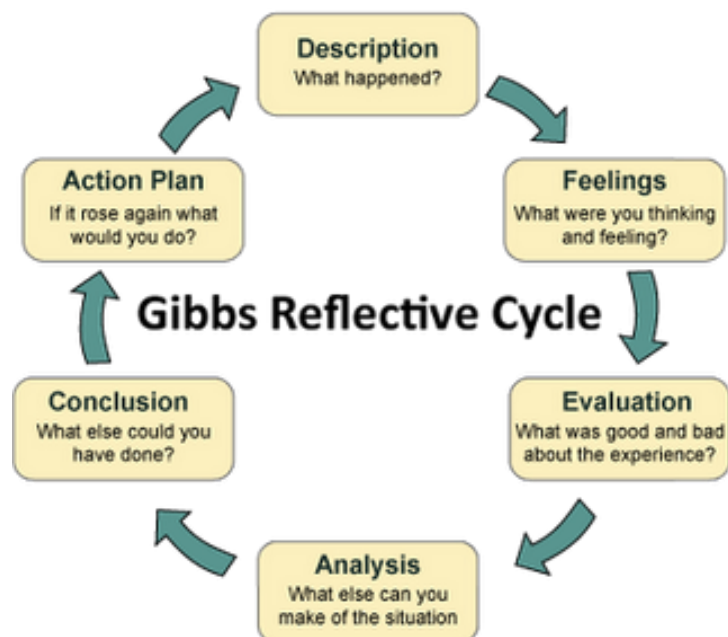
Case study

When reflecting on the use of the NLP tools, I will be using Gibbs Reflection Model.

The format I will use inside the case study will be:

- Client presenting the problem
- I (the Coach) find the NLP tool that I believe can help with the problem and describe it.
- I evaluate what worked and what didn't work when applying the tool.
- I make sense of what just happened.
- What else I could have done
- And if it happened again, what I would do

Figure 1: Gibbs Reflective Cycle



Leading in Action, (2014)

The client was referred to me after trying psychotherapy and NLP coaching.

I opened the session by contracting with him. This involved explaining to him about confidentiality and the structure and time limits that we would be following in the coaching sessions. I also mentioned to him that I follow the code of ethics of the International Coaching Federation (ICF), (ICF, 2021) and The Association for Neuro Linguistic Programming (ANLP) (anlp.org, n.d.) and that I am accredited with both Associations. It is important to let the client know that we follow a code of ethics and about confidentiality in order for the client to feel comfortable sharing information, and to know that their experience of coaching is in line with professional standards.

On reflecting on the case study, I would add a question for the client at the point of him deciding what the goal for the session is. Are there any negative consequences if you achieve this goal that would be useful to consider before we go any further? This

question is an example of seeking to ensure that the client does not set goals with unintentional negative consequences. In NLP the theory we call that NLP 'ecology'².

This session was the second session with the Client, in a contract to work 'session by session'. At the opening of the session, I asked him, "So how can I help you today?" as the beginning of the process of focusing on the client's agenda. He replied that he wants a bit of clarity, then went on to say he would like to create a goal, generate some ideas, discover a process to make those happen, unblock some issues, and find a combination of strategies for a set of conversations. It was very unlikely that we could deal with all those points in the time available.

I have chosen this coaching session as the basis of reflection because of the level of complexity for me as a Coach. I believe that the most difficult coaching sessions provide the greatest opportunity for learning. (NLP Presupposition ³ – there is not failure only feedback).

At this point, I asked myself *Clarity about what specifically?* And what about all the other things he mentioned, how can I narrow them down? This question *Clarity about what specifically?* took me back to the Meta Model from my NLP Practitioner. The Meta Model is a modality that helps me personally, when I start generalising situations, I use the Meta Model patterns ⁴ in my internal dialogue, so I bring myself to what is real, instead of guessing what is real. For example, "*That never will be going to happen*" - Response - How do I know that? Have I tried it yet?

^{2 2} NLP ecology is the study of consequences; of considering how any change you make impacts in the wider system of which you are part. Payne, S. (2014), section 2, p11

³ Presuppositions of NLP – there are about 13 in total and they are the guiding principles of NLP, it's the beliefs that you are encouraged to *presuppose* as true.

⁴ Mind Reading, Lost Performative, Cause – Effect, Complex Equivalence, Presuppositions, Nominalisations, Unspecified Verbs, (Simple Deletions, Lack of Referential Index, Comparative Deletions), Universal Quantifiers, Modal Operators of Necessity and Possibility

I asked him to tell me from all those things that he mentioned, what was the most important? He replied with an additional topic, another specific project. On reflection about this session, I believe that in future, if the meta model question to be more specific does not work to focus the agenda, I could ask the client list the topics in order of importance and confirm from this that the top topic is what he wanted to start with.

Five more minutes into our session, I felt that we still didn't have a specific idea to get the clarity my client want. He was moving the conversation to other direction, and it didn't feel right, it was like a gut feeling that I was having. I decided to ask him again so, what is your goal for the session?", at this time he said "energy, enthusiasm and self-belief". I understood that he wanted to feel energised, enthusiastic and to have self-belief.

Since he gave me 'values' or 'emotional states', it is useful to distinguish between goals/outcomes and 'values' or 'emotional states'. This is because some people might believe that an emotional state⁵ is a goal. For example, if I want to feel happy, confident, free, calm, ... etc. I might just need to connect to a memory from my past, that might bring me back the specific state that I want to feel. A memory of a place, a person, a smell, anything can trigger that specific emotional state. You can have them instantly at times.

In NLP there is a distinction between 'goals' vs 'states'. Examples of goals are:

- I want to make £1,000,000 by 31st of December 2022
- I want to weight 80 Kg by 31st of December 2022
- I want to get married by 31st of December 2024
- I want to climb Mount Everest by the 30th of June 2022
- I want to buy a new Land Rover by the end of March 2022

If we go back to WFO strategy we would find that goals need to be specific; you have steps to achieve them, it is time sensitive, you need to know where you stand in relation to your goal, you need to know where you want to get to, you can measure

⁵ Emotional States are our feelings. Like love, freedom, calm, confident, and others.

progress, that way you would have a better chance of achieving it, and additionally you want to design it yourself. I have listed the Well-Formed Outcome strategy in the definitions.

The Neuro-Linguistic Processing Model (Well-Formed Outcome Model) allows us to go beyond a mere “goal setting” (SMART) into an actual “programming” of our minds to drive us toward our desired goal. Our unconscious is our best ally and will work precisely to achieve what we set it forth.

(www.apnl.ch, n.d.)

This aligns with the feedback I have received from clients who have experienced both frameworks for setting goals...When presented to clients, most of them express a preference for the Well Formed-Outcomes as it seems more efficient than SMART, they say that it is simpler, the steps are clearer, and it has more details about the process. I have to agree as I have had better results with WFO than SMART when using it myself.

Even though the Well-Formed Outcome Model is a good strategy in general, in the case study it was not the direction that the client wished to go down. It was too early in his thinking process, as he needed to focus on how to prioritise and select one outcome to go into detail about. Under the ICF Competencies ‘The client decides the agenda of the coaching session’.

(Updated ICF Core Competencies A. Foundation, 2019)

The client starts to describe the project he is undertaking - an “ecological-base project”. I then asked him: “Why is this type of project is important to you?”. The purpose of this question is to identify his values and how they relate to the project. In NLP the understanding of values informed my approach to focus in on this. The theory suggests that if the project is in alignment with his values, he will then find motivation to move on.

Wake writes that:

Values are the principles we live by and are how we apply worth to something. Our values are what motivates us, either do something or not to do it. If something is important to us, we tend to find a way to get, to do it or not to do it.

When our values are met or matched, we feel a sense of satisfaction, harmony or rapport. When our values are not met or matched, we often feel dissatisfied, incongruent, or violated. Wake, L. (2016)

The Client went on to say that it is more a gut feeling about self and purpose. He wants to add some value to the projects he is planning to undertake. The client has a tendency of thinking out loud and with a capacity for detail that is greater than my own. As a result, I noticed that I found it challenging to track the volume of information. On reflection, in future, I could ask him to come to the session with a set goal in mind to allow us to set the agenda for the amount of time we have for the session.

The client talked for twelve minutes without interruption. I became concerned that he was deviating from the initial goal, going in circles. When the opportunity came, I paraphrased him, repeating the main points back to him, to verify if he was aware of all the information shared. I asked him to confirm my summary before we moved on. He said that this is how he gets clarity, and he was happy to continue in this way. As before, the client sets the agenda for the session.

I believe that when I gave him the time to talk for twelve minutes, I gave him what he needed. Now that I can analyse, it makes sense to me that sometimes the client just needs to be heard.

He talked about the effectiveness we have in creating our own reality. In our previous session he mentioned the Law of Attraction (Byrne, 2016) and the Reticular Activating System. He said that the concept of us thinking we would be able to affect our reality just by changing our thoughts intrigued him.

I would like to use this as an opportunity to explore how the Reticular Activating System is presented in the NLP Practitioner training. Previously I refer to how having a clear vision of the goal is one of the Well-Formed Outcomes conditions and a key point to program one's Reticular Activating System⁶.

The Reticular Activating System has many different functions, for the purpose of this assignment I am exploring the "sorting office". (Reticular Activating System: Definition & Function Video, 2021)

As Wake describes below, there is a connection between goal setting, visualisation, and the Reticular Activating System:

The Reticular Activating System or RAS is a piece of the brain that starts close to the top of the spinal column and extends upwards around two inches. It has a diameter slightly larger than a pencil. All of your senses (except smell, which goes to our brain's emotional centre) are wired directly to this bundle of neurons that's about the size of our little finger.

RAS works as a sorting office, helping us to notice the things we focus on.

Once we program our RAS to focus on a specific thing; that thing starts to be real. In other words, if we decide to buy an electric car and investigate it, then we start seeing more electric cars and TV adverts for them. When people ask me if I believe they can achieve something, I often respond that if they say that they can do it, I believe they can. If they say they can't do it, I also believe they cannot. What I mean by that is if they put their minds on either affirmation, they tend to achieve them!

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't--you're right."

Henry Ford

⁶ Reticular Activating System which is responsible for self-regulation, activation of arousal towards motivational states and mental activity Solms, M. (1996)

Wake states that:

Additionally, the goal setting process of NLP requires the client to visualise the attainment of their goal, which will then activate the reticular activating system by increasing the arousal and attention to responses, including what we pay attention consciously. This stimulates the client's nervous system towards goal seeking behaviour. As the RAS is accessed neuropeptides are released resulting in increased blood flow to the area of the body responsible for attainment of the goal. When we consider how effective visualization process are proven to be for sport performance, presentations and health related matter, it is now clear that the increased oxygenation that is activated through this increased circulation to crucial areas is one key to enabling goal attainment.

Wake, L. (2016)

Reflecting on this coaching session, next time I would focus on helping the client to choose a specific goal, use the WFO strategy to help the client to define the goal, after that I would check with the client if that goal is in alignment with his values for the goal, and if it is, we would find a visualisation strategy for the client to activate his RAS, that way he would have better chances of achieving his goal.

Towards the end of this coaching session, I noticed a shift in my client's posture, how he was articulating himself and his energy levels. I asked him to summarise the last thirty-eight minutes and he said that he never had a coaching session like this. He said that was massively useful to talk in loads of different areas. Listening to this, made me realise that this is the way he processes information and by just listening and being present without strongly directing his line of thought was the right thing to do. This coaching session was intense for me, and at same time very useful for my future practice as a coach.

Conclusion

Reflecting on this case study in detail has made me aware of how much I personally have taken from the NLP Practitioner when it comes to Values, Well-Formed Outcomes, visualization techniques and the role of the RAS. In my coaching practice in future, and for myself, I would like to explore further how these things can consciously align with each other.

Having the coaching session transcribed and analysing my approach to it, had opened my mind to other aspects that I couldn't see as the session was happening. It is almost a self-supervision, where I can dissociate⁷ from the coach role and see the session from a third position⁸.

In reflection I have adjusted my approach to goal setting. I believe that an efficient structure of setting goals with clients would be:

- Set goals using the WFO Strategy
- Elicit Client's values related to the goal and Ecology check
- Create a visualization Board (or any other visualization strategy)

Once we do that, we start programming the Reticular Activating System, therefore maximizing the chances of achieving the goal.

The NLP Practitioner course was a great success for me that started a massive learning journey towards becoming a professional Coach. I felt a great level of motivation as a result of the program and went on to study further NLP qualifications and ICF coaching qualifications. After I have finished my NLP Trainers training, I had the chance to buy an NLP Training company, and I did buy in the end. I also became a much better husband, father and son. At least, that was the feedback I have received from family members.

⁷ Dissociate – Observe myself in the specific situation as if I was watching a move of myself.

⁸ Third position – To be like a fly in the wall, observing my interaction with someone else without been in my body, seen through my own eyes.

My next step is to expand on the Well Formed-Outcome intervention and the Reticular Activating System with further reflection and research on 'self-talk' (internal dialog) in my next paper.

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