

POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE NEUROCOACHING
NEUROMINDS

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ESSAY DESCRIBE

Using a case study approach, to demonstrate the effectiveness of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) tools to understand one's Anxiety and manage its triggers.

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The Structure of this Essay is as follows:

Introduction

Literature review and Definitions

Context

Critical reflection

Conclusion

References/ Bibliography

1 - Introduction:

The objective of this assignment is to describe and critically analyse the tools and knowledge acquired throughout my NLP Practitioner training and using a case study I will try to demonstrate how it could potentially help anxiety sufferers to manage it using a simple intervention called Perceptual Positions, which will be explained in detail further into the paper. I will be using Gibbs Model of Reflection (The Performance Solution, 2014) to analyse and demonstrate my case study. Using the model, I will first describe what I have learned, how it felt then and how it felt at the time I was applying the intervention during a coaching session (transcript part). I will then evaluate my discoveries during the coaching session applying the Perceptual Position intervention. I shall draw my conclusions on the application of this intervention and its effects (or not) on anxiety states. My objective is to demonstrate the benefit of this NLP intervention in changing one's perspective of an anxious state and potentially being able to manage its triggers. To demonstrate my case, I will explore a few NLP tools and its correlation to this specific case study.

My aim is also to explain why I decided to attend the NLP Practitioner course, how it felt at the time, the methodology used during the training, and the effects it has had in my personal and professional life.

Following the structure proposed I have created a matrix with all the information regarding the training, its contents, its methodologies, assessments, and outcomes as well as some observations I made through reflection on the learnings and how it changed my family and work life.

During my Practitioner training back in 2017 I have had a great experience practicing as a coach and participating as a client in all interventions taught, we would learn all the theory and history behind the interventions, which was very insightful and then move to the practical part of the training. I didn't think I would be able to do it, but as the days went by, my confidence grew, and I started to enjoy it. One intervention that really caught my attention for its powerful and immediate impact was the Perceptual Positions Intervention. After applying the intervention to one of my colleagues, it was my turn. I had a very traumatic memory about a conflict and a set idea about the reasons why someone would act the way he/she did. After the intervention I finally

changed not just the picture I had in my mind, but the feeling towards the people involved in the event. That was one of the moments, which got me thinking that NLP was a life changing project. When I got back to work after the training I could see and feel I was using NLP in everything I did.

The main tools that I could easily use as it was somehow natural to me was Rapport¹(Payne, 2015) and as I got better at it, I started to use my calibration² (Payne, 2015) skills when engaging with people and I tested many times how long a conversation would go when using the tools or not. I have always had good rapport with people, and I am naturally good at picking up clues or using Calibration to raise my rapport state.

Learning the presuppositions of NLP³(Payne, 2015) was like a curtain opening to the horizon. I was at awe when I realized how learning those principles could massively change my interaction with my clients and family. How a simple pre-assumption could potentially change the outcome of a session. It can be empowering and destructive at the same time. I started to pay attention to my own behaviour and be more compassionate about how I reacted to things or situations and started to look at my own existence more like a NLPer. Nowadays in our house, even the kids use presuppositions and know about NLP and Coaching. One that really stuck with me was “The map is not the territory”. It also got me to the conclusion that most people use NLP without even knowing they’re doing it.

Ultimately, participating on the NLP Practitioner course changed me at all levels. And it is funny that only now, writing this course work that I came to realise how much it impacted me. The reflections and the analysis I have been making during this process have been profound.

On a PERSONAL level it had clearly changed my perception about some of the things I do and how I react to the world around me. Understanding Neurological Levels⁴ and values⁵ clearly helped me understand where my limiting beliefs came from as well as my personal preferences.

¹ Rapport: ability to relate to others in a way that creates trusts and understanding (Payne, 2015)

² Calibration: Is the ability to notice change that occur from moment to moment in another person using your sensory acuity. (Payne, 2015)

³ Presuppositions of NLP: Guiding principles to assist NLPers to work most effectively with others. (Payne, 2015)

⁴ Neurological Levels: NLP Model created by Dilts to provide useful framework for nay required change and for deciding at what level is appropriate to work to achieve desired outcome. (Payne, 2015)

CLIENTS - I am a business owner and also a Doula and the techniques learn were very helpful specially when talking to my employees as well as my clients.

I didn't have any coaching clients after the NLP Practitioner as I was still working in a different field, but my immediate clients were my colleagues and that relationship changed massively. I could understand some of the team issues and put myself into my manager's shoes at the time. It transformed my relationships at work. At the time I was also involved in my partner's business and had some difficulties understanding the staff interactions, especially because of our age gap and cultural differences. Since practitioner I have not only changed the way I communicate to the staff, but I try always to see the issues from their map of the world.

THE WORLD - My world changed a lot. I changed in many ways, and I believe we influence people every second, so I can say that I have changed the world around me to a better one. I changed it by being understanding, for understanding people's preferences and the importance of respecting their map of the worlds. How the Map is not the territory and how a presupposition has many meanings depending where you're departing from. After my Practitioner I pursued my Master Practitioner and then my Professional Coaching skills course and it was a great opportunity to explore the knowledge gained at Practitioner level and take to the next level.

2 - Context

Not long ago, out of nowhere I had an anxiety attack. I had no idea what was happening to me or why I was going through that. It started to be a daily problem and got to a point where it was hard to keep a normal life. I started to investigate it with some critical thinking to understand what was triggering it and what to do to stop it. During the episodes I couldn't see any rational or means of stopping the apices of it. During that time, I was given a book called "OCD ANXIETY PANIC ATTACKS AND RELATED DEPPRESSION" (Adam Shaw, 2016). It helped me immensely on firstly accept it, embrace it and then control it. It defines anxiety in very human and simple way – "Anxiety is what it is. Thoughts are thoughts, nothing else. And we need these thoughts as humans, to learn, live and evolve. A meaning can attach itself to a thought – so accept it and let it be there. If it caused us further anxiety, move

⁵ Values: Things which are important to us.

towards it, embrace it, and allowing yourself to feel these is the key. It only has power and growth if you give it that, by fighting it. But if you face and embrace your fear and accept that sometimes you'll feel bad, you will see how quickly it power shrinks" (Adam Shaw, 2016, p. 193). When looking into the details of it, I had an idea of combining the teachings from Adam to the NLP techniques I had learn to help my coaching and Doula's clients deal with their own anxieties an its triggers. The book describes a technique called "Pulling the Trigger" (Adam Shaw, 2016), which was a massive help when I was faced with an eminent episode.

I believe that after my own home and immediate family my doula clients are the people that can experience what I have learned the most. On my work as a doula, families come to me primarily because of their fear of childbirth. The idea of bringing a child to this world and what can or cannot happen seems to be too much for some families. One of my main objectives in applying for this program was to develop a new process to improve my clients' birth experiences by diminishing their anxiety levels. One way of fighting your fear is looking into it from a different perspective.

3 – Literature review and Definitions:

NLP – Neuro-Linguistic Programming

As per Richard Bandler "NLP is an attitude and a methodology that leaves behind a trail of techniques).

I perceive it as the set of tools that helps humans to change their attitude and improve techniques towards the understanding of human existential problems". I believe it is subjective to one's experience of the topic, but NLP is everything we do daily mapped out by the NLP pioneers.

Some of the definitions I find interesting are (as detailed by Wake, 2008):

- NLP is the martial art of communication: graceful, enjoyable, and very effective. (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002)
- NLP is an accelerated learning strategy for the detection and utilization of patterns in the world (John Grinder).
- NLP is the systematic study of human communication (Alex Von Uhde).
- NLP is the method for modelling excellence so it can be duplicated. (Wake, 2008)

Perceptual Positions Intervention (Grinder & De Lozier, 1995)

Perceptual Positions is a NLP technique that allows us to have multiple perspective in a situation, so that we can have greater influence, insight and be more flexible. The intervention consists of one standing into three different positions and experience the “self”, the “other” and the “observer”.

The **Self** position is a position where we see things from our own point of view.

The **Other** position is we picture ourselves in someone else’s body, experiencing the world through their senses. We see things from their point of view.

The **Observer** position is often called the “fly on the wall”. It’s a place where we observe the situation from an objective and detached perspective. (Payne, S. 2015)

“We all spend time in these three positions, we do them naturally, and they help us understand any situation or outcome better. The ability to move cleanly between them, consciously or unconsciously, is necessary to act with wisdom, and to appreciate the wonderful complexity of our relationships. First, second and third positions are an explicit recognition that the map is not the territory”. (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002)

Cause & Effect:

In NLP, there is what we call “cause and effect,” it’s a language or communication pattern, between one element and the other, it occurs mostly within oneself. Cause and effect are that something leads to another or makes something else happen. (YOUNG, 2020)

Doula

“We use the term “doula” as a title for those individuals who surround, interact with, and aid at any time within the perinatal period, which includes pregnancy, birth, and lactation. The function of the doula varies in different cultures from a little help here and there to complete succouring, including bathing, cooking, carrying, and feeding. Whatever the doula does, however, is less important than the fact she is there. Her very presence gives mother a better chance of remaining calm and nursing her baby. Her presence could save the mother’s milk” (Raphael 1973: p.141)

A Doula is someone that will make sure the basic need of a birthing mother is met and she is able to birth as nature intended. (MERRIAN-WEBSTER, 2021)

Anxiety:

Anxiety is a state of mind that we all experience from time to time. Anxiety is a Symptom, a response to a potential challenging or threatening experience. (Thomas, 2004)

4 - Critical Reflection:

For the critical part of this work, I will describe a coaching session and my findings throughout the process. This is my first session applying this tool and for a specific purpose, so I had prepared and tried to recite the whole process in my head many times before.

This was the second session I had with this client. On our previous session the client demonstrated a great deal of anxiety towards a situation with a friend. They have been friends for a long time and share a strong bond. Recently because of the current situation with the pandemic in place they started to disagree on some of the things happening. My client doesn't believe the science is settle when it comes to vaccinations and founded her decisions on scientific data or lack of it now. Her friend on the other hand truly believes in vaccines and apparently doesn't want to even start a discussion regarding the topic. Her friend simply decided to end their 20 years friendship because of that. My client was inconsolable and in a lot of conflict as she could not understand why someone would do such a thing.

As we had spoken about the topic on our previous sessions, we started by framing the sessions. I could observe she was distraught, so I gave her time and she slowly got into a better state. When building rapport language is important but represents only on small part of it. The body language is a major part of it, therefore when I noticed her unsettled body language, I changed my breathing and arm's positions. She then mirrored⁶ me. (JOHN & O'CONNOR, 2002) I was noticing through calibration she was getting more and more relaxed and open to take part in the process. I felt insecure when trying to do it, but I kept going and I started to notice

⁶ Mirroring: Replication the mirror image of an aspect of someone's physiology. (Payne, 2015)

she was letting her arms down and uncrossing her legs. On reflection, next time I will focus more on the pre framing and spend more time letting the client speak about the situation, as I believe it will get the client associated at a deeper level and the outcome may be even stronger.

When rapport was established, we moved on to contracting, as we normally do on every session, where I explained again the structure of the session, the tool we were going to use and then I informed the client that as a coach I am bound to the ICF code of ethics⁷ (International Coaching Federation, 2022) and competencies as well as ANLP code of ethics⁸ (The association for NLP, 2022). I also informed that all information was confidential and the only time I would have to disclose to anyone was if I believed she could pose a threat to herself or others. She accepted and we moved on.

I asked the client to briefly give me an idea of what was the situation and she said:

Client; “The talk to me anymore because I don't agree with her on something that she considers very important which is being vaccinated”.

The client exposed a disagreement with a friend that had a different point of view about something. I proposed to go through the Perceptual positions intervention as this was a tool I particularly like when there is conflict. “There are three ways we can look at our experience” (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002). On this intervention is important that the client is associated to the position she is (first position)⁹, therefore, I use a type of language that help the client to fully associate using their five senses. What are you feeling? What are you seeing? what are you hearing? (Payne, S. 2015). On a next opportunity I would spend more time on this step and would also add some other questions like “How does this affects you? What are you thinking about this? (Payne, 2015)

The client closed her eyes and got emotional (fully associated¹⁰ with her feelings) (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002), then she said: *“I feel sad because I've lost so*

⁷ <https://coachingfederation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>

⁸ <https://anlp.org/anlp-members-code-of-ethics>

⁹ First Position: looking at the world completely from your point of view (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002)

¹⁰ Association: is fully living an experience with feeling - When someone is **associated** into an internal representation (their viewpoint is located within the representation), they will have access to the feelings in that experience. (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002)

many people recently”; And I don't want to lose her especially because she's not dying. She's choosing not to be with me or to talk to me.”

I tried to get her even more associated with her feelings by asking “and what else?” She then went on adding important information regarding the relationship and how this friend reminded her of her mum’s personality. She mentioned she lost her mum recently, so it got even deeper.

At this I could see and feel (Calibration) she was getting in a not ecological (Payne, 2015) or beneficial state, so I asked her to shake it off and mentioned something completely out of context, so she could halt the state. This is one of the steps of the intervention – Breaking State is important to move on completely “dissociated” from that initial position.

On the second part I asked her to “associate” with her friend (second position)¹¹ (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002)

“She has very strong opinions and she doesn't like it when people don't share the same opinion as she does. And when they don't agree with her, she can be quite aggressive in her words and actions. Not physically aggressive, but just she's very abrupt and in her way of being, she's like shape in or ship out. She doesn't do things by half. She's very intense”.

I let her go on for a while, then I stopped her as I could see she was dissociated¹² to make sure she was fully associated with the second position (her friend), as she was describing her friend in second person(she), and I needed her to be her friend and speak in first person(I). I remember very clearly from my training Steve Payne saying that when moving to a position the client language must reflect them being in that position.

The client then started moved in the chair and changed her posture and then started to describe the situation through her friend’s eyes.

¹¹ Second Position: Consider how it would look, feel and sound from another person’s point of view (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002)

¹² Dissociation: (outside the experience), the feelings will be less intense (though they may still have feelings about what they are seeing)

Client: “I’m feeling very frustrated because she is being stupid and she's reading all this information on fake news and believing in them. And she's been very selfish as well because she must think about public health not just her own. And she's lost her mom already for this virus and I don't want her to die so I want her to vaccinate. And she needs to understand that, that she's the only friend that I have that has taken me as I am, who loves me as I am, and I don't want her to die.”

On this part the client was visibly emotional and fully associated giving by the language, tonality of voice, breathing pattern and body language. I kept asking what else?, until I could see it was safe and comfortable and could see that the objective of being in second position was achieved. The client broke state once again and I instructed her to step on the third position¹³ and asked the client to describe what she could see. By the client's description she clearly sees that there was a third point of view and initially was confused, which according to Payne confusion is a good state. As the client went on describing the situation as third position, I noticed that she was not at a cause, but effect (YOUNG, 2020), so I At this point I use another NLP tool called Milton Language to access her unconscious mind.

The Milton Model is process of using artfully vague and ambiguous sentences, so the client's unconscious mind would fill in the gaps and search for a meaning based on their own experience. (Payne, S. 2015)

Me: If you knew, what would that be? What would that look like?

The client moved on to articulate and understand her friend's point of view, but there was still some reluctance to understand, so I kept using Milton language to chunk up¹⁴ (Payne, 2015) and get the client to move the unconscious realizations of the situation to a conscious mind and then have the understanding to act. At this point I believe I could have asked more open questions and get her to a deeper

¹³ Third Position: The experience of seeing the world from an outside point of view, as if you're a completely independent observer.

¹⁴ Chunk up: When we “Chunk Up” the language gets more abstract and there are more chances for agreement, and when we “Chunk Down” we tend to be looking for the specific details that may have been missing in the chunk up. (NLP World , 2022)

understanding, but she was going fast, and I didn't act to slow it down. I could have changed my physiology, breathing and tonality.

Client: Well, in Anna's perspective, the thing that I need to do is to vaccinate. So, the only thing I think I can say here is, "Okay, Anna, I am going to vaccinate tomorrow," and pretend I did.

Me: What would that change?

I again asked an open question and she started to move towards cause. I had to keep the flow and tried to articulate with the client, and showing compassion towards what she was feeling was a natural and unconscious way I found to keep rapport

Client: That would make her feel safe, I guess.

Me: And feeling safe is important?

I could also have asked why is that important? How?

Client: I could be vaccinated today and still die tomorrow or something else. There is no assurance of life. But there is assurance of true love.

At this point the client starts to consciously move to a conclusion and getting to the point of self-realization. Body language seems relaxed, and client started to cry.

Me: Is there anything that you could do to change, or do you feel like there anything that you need to do to change something?

Client: I've thought about this a lot. What she wants of me is for me to vaccinate. That, at the moment, I don't want to.

Me: Do you understand why?

Client: Yeah, yeah. I understand why. Now I understand it even better. Understanding why she's so angry with me. Perhaps the only thing I can do is to continue to reassure her of my love. And hope that she will understand that it's best to be angry and still around me and love me whilst I'm still here than be angry and lose me because I'm not going to change my mind

Me: But is that something that you can control?

Client: No. I can always leave a voice message.

Me: Do what is important to you and see if she can see also your part on this.

Client: I think I have a better perspective of why she's being so angry, and I don't believe she will want to speak to me.

Me: So, if you were to speak to Anna later today, how would you feel about the situation?

Client: Yeah, I don't think she can realise that perhaps she's acting like this because perhaps she's afraid of losing someone else she loves. I only came to realising this now as we're doing this exercise. And perhaps I would do is just, with my words and with my messages, reinforce her, that I will always be here in my love. Of course, I will die one day but as long as I'm here, I'll always be by her side no matter what, vaccinated or not.

The client could clearly see the dynamics between them, where both were coming from and verbalized that doing this exercise brought her this realisation.

I should have taken her back to first position and help her see the situation back from that initial point. On a next opportunity I would go through it on a slower pace if the client permits.

5 - Conclusion:

I followed up with her after a couple of weeks and she said that they spoke, and both could agree on the discoveries made by my client. They both agreed that they didn't have to approve each other's beliefs but accept it and move on. She mentioned that

her anxiety towards it was gone and was feeling much better. She even mentioned she had other issues she would like to deal with using the same intervention on another session.

On a reflection about the process itself, I believe I can explore each position even further next time and maybe get the client even more associated.

As per the purpose of this paper and what my intention was on my introduction I can see similarities on both approaches - Perceptual Positions and Pulling the Trigger (Adam Shaw, 2016). Both approaches use understanding, acceptance and embracing.

As to my intention to the use this intervention on Pregnant clients I have to acknowledge that this approach may not be ideal as I would I have to assess the ecology¹⁵(Payne, 2015) of getting a pregnant client associated to an anxious state. Would need to make sure it goes in hand with both ANLP and ICF code of ethics as well as my doula's code of ethics (Rede Portuguesa de Doulas, 2022). After reflection on the outcome and my proposal I realized that I could take this to the next level and add some of my coaching skills like creative coaching, clean language and assess how it would play out.

I suppose that during my doula practice I can positively apply perceptual positions intervention to situations where the clients are faced with difficult situations like deciding what kind of birth setting or dealing with partners disagreements regarding the birth plan and medical interventions.

On my next paper I will expand these findings to include coaching skills and explore the benefits even further.

I come to realise that in coaching, therapy, NLP or Doula I have many tools and theories, but at the end of the day my ability to use them all together, always making sure I follow the ethics and always focus in helping my clients find their own answers will come from my humanity and purpose.

¹⁵ Ecology: Is the study of consequences, of considering how any change you make impacts on the wider system of which you are part. (Payne, 2015)

“The differences you see when you look at the world in different ways are what give it richness and what gives you the choice. The idea is to be aware of the difference, rather than try to impose uniformity”. (O'Connor & John Seymour, 2002, pg 77)

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