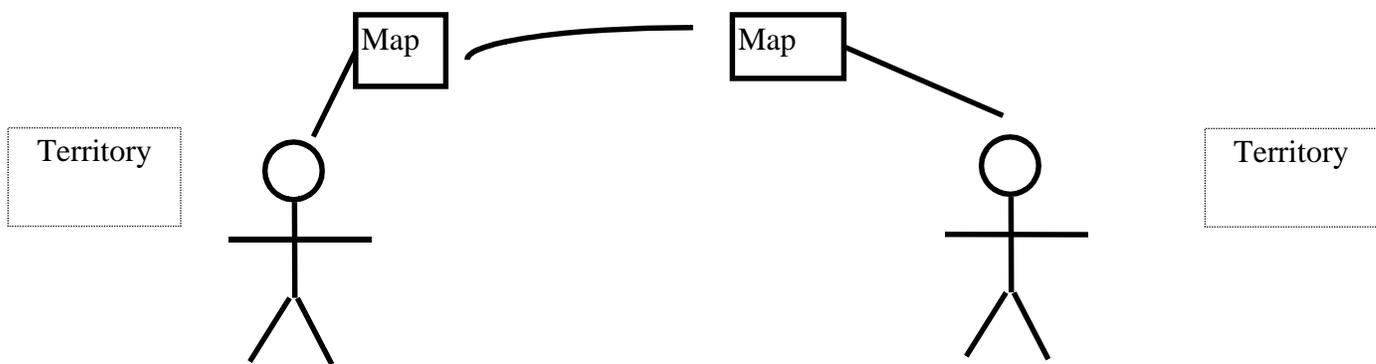


PRESUPPOSITIONS OF NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP)

1. The meaning of the communication is the response it elicits.

The response you get from someone you are communicating with is actually, what the communication meant. This is tricky to understand at first, but once you get it, it can change the way you communicate. If I am trying to communicate “*meet me at 2 pm*” and the person thinks I said “*3 pm*,” somehow the meaning was “*3 pm*.” I may try to communicate something in a nice way, but if the person receives a “shaming” message, I must have communicated “shame.” You might say, well, the person is taking what I am saying wrong. Well, we could look at it that way, but then how will I ever effectively communicate with them, if I am holding them responsible for what it means. Good luck in trying to change how they receive information. I have tried this and it doesn’t seem to be that effective. Rather, I need to continue to try various ways of communicating, i.e. flexibility in my communication style, until they get the desired message.



2. “The map is not the territory.”

This presupposition refers to the concept that what we perceive, that is, the “map” is not the same as true reality or “the territory.” This is not to say that there is no reality, but to distinguish our perceptions from reality. We get into trouble when we think what is in our minds, or our perceptions *are* reality. We then have a hard time understanding other people’s perspectives. We only see part of the picture. If we are humble, then we can accept this more readily. We do not have all knowledge or see everything there is to see in a situation. We only see things from our point of view. If our map is “rich” and is closer to what really is, then we going to have a more realistic viewpoint and we will be much healthy. If our map is distorted and skewed and have an impoverished view of the world, we are going to experience some troubles. NLP is about helping individuals gain a richer view of the world. Every technique or exercise is based on enriching one’s map. Anyone who has recovered from depression, addiction or an abusive relationship can testify how their map of reality was distorted and through the process of gaining a better map, they live a healthier life.

3. There is no substitute for clean, open sensory channels.

Sensory information, that is, what the body tells us is “cleaner” information, than what we tend to say. I may say that “I am fine” but my body will provide more useful information to the therapist. An NLP programmer is trained to notice body changes such as shifts in breathing, skin coloration changes, eye movements, gestures, body postures and other changes. We can see or

“calibrate” a certain emotional state that a person is experiencing. Words are useful, but they are secondary representations of reality. Bodily sensations are primary experiences of reality. The work of [Richard E. Cytowic](http://cytowic.net/), (<http://cytowic.net/>) the neurosurgeon who operated on James Brady, who took a bullet for President Reagan, discovered that there are more brain neurons going from the limbic system to the neo-cortex than those going from the neocortex back to the limbic system. What does this mean? We make decisions based on feeling rather than higher thinking. The grey matter in our brain helps us interpret reality, but doesn't really do the deciding. Spiritual experiences are experienced more in the limbic system as well and are pretty sensory based. Most spiritual experiences involve hearing, seeing, tasting, touching and smell.

Therapists who are aware of this, notice that someone who is anxious, and uses words like, “I feel scared when my boss comes into the room” look at their bodies. While they are talking their face loses color, signifying that they are entering a sympathetic nervous system response, the hands clench into fists, *etc.* The words are further removed from the “real” experience, while the physical sensations are more closely related to reality. Oftentimes, we don't listen to our bodies to notice what is happening. This doesn't mean that we based decisions on emotion or bodily sensations, but to listen to them gives us important information on what is going on around us.

4. There are two levels of communication: Conscious and Unconscious.

We do not just communicate as a conscious level, but at an unconscious level as well. Non-verbal communication, gestures, eye movements, skin color changes, posturing, tonality, *etc.* goes with the conscious communication to add to the message. I may ask my wife to pick up milk at the store and depending upon the tone of voice and my non-verbal messages, she could pick up if there is a hidden communication.

5. Resistance is a comment more about the inflexibility of the communicator. (Therapist)

When the recipient of our communication appears to be resistant, we interpret this as more a comment about ourselves, than the other person. We somehow are stuck in how we are communicating. We need to speak their language. What use is there in communication if we are not heard. More often than not, we can not get them to change so that they will understand. It is we who need to be flexible enough to help them understand. Old styles of psychotherapy focused on the client who was resistant, rather than the therapist needed more tools to help them understand. Can this presupposition be taken too far? Perhaps. But more often than not, we are probably not stretching ourselves enough to connect with the other person's world. Instead, we assume our way is correct and try to drag them over to where we are.

6. People have all the resources needed to change.

This looks funny to say at first, but what this means is that people really have the resources needed to change. They may not be accessing or even aware of those resources, but the resources lie within the individual rather than the therapist. Old styles of counseling assumed that the therapist was more resourceful than the client and that he/she was going to “help” them. This paradigm sees the therapist as a co-worker who is going to assist the client in accessing their resources. Hence, the client leaves the therapeutic relationship “*knowing how to fish*” rather than coming back to the therapist for a “*fish*” each week. This paradigm also helps the therapist stay humble.

7. The positive worth of an individual is held constant while the value and appropriateness of internal/ external behavior is questioned.

It is more difficult to deal with a behavior when our self-worth goes up and down with our behaviors. This is not to say that there is not a moral placement upon behavior or that there are no “good” or “bad” behaviors. What it is saying is that each person has worth that is not dependent upon what they do. Behaviors should be questioned as to how useful or not useful they are to the person. This way the person can change more effectively.

8. All behavior has a positive intention or purpose.

Behaviors are purposeful and have some positive intention. This does not mean that every behavior is positive. “The road to hell is paved with positive intentions.” Suicidal or homicidal feelings may have some purposeful intent, but they may not be positive for the victim or the person. But it means that our behavior, no matter how ugly, bizarre or immoral is trying to achieve a purpose. It may not work so well, but we are aiming for that. We were created with the need to help ourselves or better our situation. It is hard for us to comprehend doing something that is truly self-destructive. Even “self destructive” behaviors “serve” the person somehow. Once we discover our real intentions, we can try to come up with a more fitting behavior. We often “miss the mark.” We are aiming for love or attention or acceptance, but we may overeat, commit adultery, or gossip. Feeling guilty which could cause us to repent and change our mind can be a good thing. Getting stuck into unhealthy shame, just stops us and sometimes causes us to do it again. So rather than shaming ourselves about the behavior, we need the flexibility to do something different. “*A fool repeats his folly.*” (Proverb 26:11) How many times do we do that same unhelpful behavior? We do so because we are trying to meet a need. Just trying to eliminate some behaviors is like trying to wish away a broken leg. We need to figure out what our truest need is and seek guidance to meet that need another way. It is also helpful to realize that other people’s behaviors that are annoying us or affecting us worse, that they have a positive intention for that other person. That perhaps they are not trying to hurt us, but doing the “best” they know to do in life. This can help us be more forgiving.

9. There are no failures in communication. . . only outcomes.

This presupposition helps us to never give up. It helps us continue the race. If we stop and think that we are through, that there is no more hope, that we have failed, there are no more chances, we are going to have some serious problems. But if we can learn from our mistakes, continue to receive what appears to be an undesired outcome as “feedback,” we can learn from it. We should learn from every sin we commit so as not to do it again.

10. The person with the most requisite variety is in control.

The more flexible a person is, the more choice they will have and the more control they will experience. When a person is speaking to a group of people, the more variety the speaker has in communication, the more they will connect with their audience, which gives them greater choice. A physician, who only knows how to do surgery, will not be as affective as the doctor who can not only do surgery, prescriptive medicine, preventative medicine and diagnostics. “*When you are a hammer, everything looks like a nail.*” Adding more choices gives us more freedom. An addiction usually has only two choices: “using” or “trying not to use.” Recovery gives us three, or four or even ten alternatives.

11. Rapport is meeting an individual at his/her model of the world.

Rapport is when we have influence with another individual and seek to understand their world. Many people come to my office wanting “*communication skills.*” I tell them that they already have communication skills. “*Talking,*” “*interrupting,*” “*silence*” and “*stomping off*” are communicating something. What they may be really asking for is that ability to communicate in

such a way that they are close and influential with the other person. NLP has skills that can be taught consciously to people to develop rapport.

12. Good decision making requires accurate information.

Many problems can be traced to lacking good and accurate information. “People perish for lack of knowledge.”(Hosea 4:6) A drug addict or a person stricken with panic disorder is operating without clean and accurate information. It is their misinterpretation of reality that is causing them pain. They assume that what they are experiencing is reality. But in fact, it is their map or re-presentation of reality. The more accurate the information—the better the decision.

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