

NLPt and NLP



By Sharon Rooke

Neuro-linguistic psychotherapy and neuro-linguistic programming – what’s the difference?

Neuro-linguistic programming is defined as ‘the study of the structure of subjective experience’ or ‘an attitude, a methodology, that leads to a trail of techniques’ or ‘modelling excellence’.

You may have your own definition because that’s part of the beauty of NLP – it’s flexible and personal!

Neuro-linguistic psychotherapy is a specialised context of the application of NLP skills, knowledge with the backdrop of understanding change, systems and people. It is applied psychology in a therapeutic setting, assisting clients to achieve their outcome.

Some years ago I decided to become fit. ‘What does that mean to you, how will you know?’ My husband has learnt a great deal of NLP through osmosis! I wanted a holistic level of fitness, an outcome that covered different elements.

So I signed up for a triathlon! Receiving many learnings about ecology within outcomes, and also very practical experience of the Bandura Curve.

Beginning the training meant buying certain equipment; a bike (essential); swimming hat and goggles (again essential); a tri suit (reluctantly but open to other’s expertise). Some advice given was better than others; waterproof mascara was not purchased.

But the biggest shock and realisation was swimming. OMG! But I had been swimming for years – since I was that high! I was quickly discovering that I didn’t know how to swim, I simply knew how not to sink!

A minimum of a 4-year journey, including the 2 years’ diploma training to become a qualified Neuro-linguistic Psychotherapist, was a similar realisation. A Master Practitioner and Trainer of NLP, I thought I knew it all and able to help anyone, unaware of what was to follow. The reality was that I had only learnt how



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to swim, feeling comfortable in the deep end. We were now moving into open water, deep sea diving, exploring new frontiers!

Training to become an accredited neuro-linguistic psychotherapist covers NLP, human development, psychopathology, psychopharmacology, psychotherapeutic theories and modalities; completing a research project and a mental health placement. The robust accreditation process for NLPtCA, leading to UKCP registrant means rigorous levels of competence, integration, qualitative and quantitative criteria which felt strangely reassuring.

In his encyclopaedia, Dilts defines psychotherapy as being ‘the practice of helping people to regain and maintain mental health’. Within the origins of NLP lie three distinct models of psychotherapy – Gestalt therapy, Family therapy, Clinical Hypnotherapy – from

the creators, exemplars, leaders of these models; Perls, Satir and Erickson respectively.

At their time, they were pushing the boundaries of the field of psychotherapy. Each could be viewed as a maverick, because of the difference to the norm of that time. And that time was rich pickings for doing something different. Moving away from the rigidity and prescriptiveness of psychoanalysis, focusing on the person, their process and outcome. Formulating beliefs about people and change that develop and merge into NLP presuppositions.

NLP and NLPt are empowering models, providing means and methods of assisting people to become more empowered in their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Learn about Submodalities and you can become the director of your own mind, changing the characteristics of

the picture and the soundtrack, thereby changing the meaning. Understanding the principles of systems and process questioning an internal map can be tracked to influence with integrity, leading them to their outcome.

Lingering with linguistics enables language to be ambiguously vague or the frame to be switched; offering alternative meanings or contexts. And the difference that makes the difference: modelling. With all of this and much more available how could we not become empowered and empowering. Dislikes, limiting beliefs and bad habits or un-useful strategies can become transformed.

So where are the boundaries? The lifeguards, the guide rope or the shark net that need to exist to support practitioners to stay safe and not go out of their depth, especially when working alongside a non-swimmer. What exists to keep the client safe? What is your boundary of safe practice? How do you make sure that you are working appropriately for your training?

NLPtCA is a member organisation of UKCP, part of the Constructivist and Existential College, that provides a route to UKCP and PSA registration. UKCP is the quality mark for high standards in psychotherapy. It holds a national register of psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors, listing members who meet standards and training requirements. They also hold a specialist register for psychotherapists qualified to work with children and young people.

NLPtCA, the home of NLP therapy, has 100 members that are supported and guided by ethics, policies and procedures. A community of NLPt professionals that offer neurolinguistic psychotherapy and counselling; training and development to become and maintain the title of Neurolinguistic Psychotherapist; clinical supervision to ensure personal and professional development that is educative, supportive and managerial.

The supervisory relationship is one of the most important relationships for the trainee neurolinguistic psychotherapist. With a current requirement of 150

supervision to 450 client hours, a good working alliance is essential.

An NLPt supervisor is a qualified and experienced NLPt psychotherapist, who has had additional and specialised training in supervision. They provide support, exploring how the therapist is impacted or affected by their work. The therapist becomes consciously aware of the constructs within the therapeutic relationship. A managerial role in supervision explores ethical dilemmas and ensures standards of competence and scope of practice.

The scope of practice or range of issues is a defining line between NLP and NLPt. At a NLP practice group there was

NLP and NLPt are empowering models

some shared learning of NLP experience and working with others. Excitedly they shared their story of working with their friend (any flags of boundaries yet?).

This person had just completed a 30-hour NLP Diploma and was very keen to utilise their new found skills. Their friend

wanted to stop taking drugs, completely off the scale in terms of scope of practice and training qualification.

Scope of practice boundaries exist to protect the therapist and the client. All therapists can go out of their depth, sometimes without knowing, sometimes being caught in the rip tide and finding themselves pulled along by a current that they weren't aware of, but that was much stronger than them. Knowing what to do when we're out there keeps us safe and it also keeps our clients safe too.

Seeing a new client with a new problem may be really exciting and great experience for you, using your second positioning skill you can future pace whether this would be a great experience for them.

Utilising your third positioning skills you are able to perceive how this situation would be considered from an independent perspective or maybe at a complaints hearing. This is empowering.

An experienced NLPt supervisor says that because NLP is so empowering we can lose sight of boundaries.

Changing limiting beliefs is a skill; maintaining limits is skilful. ●

