An Introduction to NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming)

Neuro = Brain
Linguistic = Language
Programming = How our patterns of thinking and behaving are shaped

Some of the basic principles behind NLP

- Usually the things we do are either an attempt to get a feeling we want, or to stop a feeling we don't want. **Example:** We might do something for someone to feel good about being helpful or a get a sense of satisfaction, or we might do it to stop feeling annoyed about what we interpret as their nagging!
- Everyone is unique; because everyone has different experiences, everyone has developed their own way of perceiving and thinking about the world they live in, and experience a unique mix of the emotions that are available to us all. That's why NLP is uniquely tailored to every individual – to work with what's happening for you, now, to get the outcome you want.
- We all (yes, *all*) do the best we can with the resources we have at any given time. (It makes sense, doesn't it? If we knew how to do even better, we just would!)
- *How* we think determines how we feel, and how we feel determines how we act or behave – so by changing how we think, we change how we feel, and can then more easily change what we're doing, stop getting what we don't want and get what we do want.

What is meant by *How* we think?

In order for us to function, the great majority of the thinking that drives us is out of our awareness (unconscious). An iceberg is a good analogy; consider our conscious thinking as the tip of the iceberg above the water, and the unconscious, everything below.

NLP is a lot about bringing your unconscious thinking patterns to the surface, increasing your awareness and guiding you through changes that make your patterns work better for you. Then you can just let them go and get on with their newly efficient work! Because we're working with the structure of thinking, not what you're thinking about, there's no need to endlessly talk about the past or your problems – how good is that?

Whether we're consciously aware of it or not, we all think in terms of our senses - in pictures, sound, feelings, and sometimes even tastes and smells. Our language reflects this (see below for <u>more about language</u>), for example:

Pictures: "I *see* what you mean", "The future is *bright*".
Sound: "That *rings* a bell", "I *hear* what you're saying" (some people say "I *see* what you're saying" – in their heads, they're making a picture from your words)
Feelings: "That went so *smoothly*" or "She has the *weight* of the world on her shoulders".
Taste: "It left me with a bad *taste* in my mouth"
Smell: "I *smell* a rat"
(The above are also all metaphors, something else we work with in NLP, simply because we all use them, every day, as one way of making sense of our lives.)

Some of us are more conscious of what we see in our mind's eye, some of us are very aware of our self-talk (our "inner voice") or other 'noise' in our heads; some of us notice that our emotions usually end up creating a bodily feeling – and some people really do get a bad taste in their mouths when something is not right for them, or are alerted by a smell of some sort.

We also all have gut feelings (which we sometimes ignore in favour of 'rational' thought), and follow our hearts – or fail to. NLP works with these, too.

So, what do we do with this information?

Most of us have been to the movies at some point – imagine you are sitting in the front row, up close and personal to the biggest screen ever. You're watching your favourite movie, and not only is it in vibrant colour, it's in 3D - so it's leaping off the screen right at you. There's surround sound reverberating around you, and every now and then a smell relating to the movie is puffed into the theatre. It couldn't get any more real unless you were in the world created by the movie.

Then imagine sitting in your room at home, watching the same movie on your mobile phone, in black and white. It's in flat 2D, with the sound turned down so you're barely able to hear the music or the dialogue. To cap it all off, your phone's over the other side of the room, lying flat, so all you can really see is a bit of light and dark movement. How much does the movie affect you now?

Now – apply those two extremes to some slightly annoying thing that's been bugging you, and notice the difference in how you feel, depending on whether you're imagining the movie theatre, or the phone.

That's just one small but powerful example of how NLP works to change how you're feeling by changing **how** you're thinking.

More about Language

We also work a lot with language (the linguistics part of Neuro Linguistic Programming) – how we're talking to ourselves or others. A brief example:

If we do something we're not too happy about, and say something like "Well I'm an idiot! I wish I hadn't done that, how stupid", we're doing three things that are not useful:

1. Confusing our *behaviour* (the thing we did) with who we are (not an idiot at all, just a person who did something).
2. Focusing on the past (feeling bad about having done something, when we can't change it).
3. Getting stuck in feeling stupid.

But if we said instead "Well, that wasn't a smart thing to do, what could I do differently next time?" our three points look like this:

1. We're aware we did something that didn't meet our standards or achieve our goal, and we're okay with who we are.
2. Our focus immediately goes onto being smart and finding an appropriate alternative behaviour.
3. We're focusing on the future, and feeling good that we have taken control and primed ourselves to get it right next time, and every time after that.

Thank you for your interest in NLP, and wishing you More and Better of everything important to you. (You can make an appointment via phone, email or online via my website - see below.)