Integral Eye Movement Practitioner Course

Pre-course Module
Short Version

“Change in the Blink of an Eye”

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Pre-course Module

This module is designed to provide pre-course reading and understanding for those who do not have a formal qualification in NLP or Hypnotherapy. It is not a definitive guide to NLP or Hypnotherapy and will not replace an NLP or Hypnotherapy certification qualification.

Contents

1. What is NLP? - History and basic principles

Neuro Linguistic Programming:

Developed by Dr Richard Bandler and Dr John Grinder in the 1970’s. they spent several years modelling the therapeutic practices of Family Therapist Virginia Satir, Psychologist Fritz Perls and the father of Modern Hypnotherapy Dr Milton Erickson.

All three achieved a high success rate and positive outcome rate. Bandler & Grinder wanted to know what it was that made successful people, successful. Grinder was a Linguist and Bander a Computer Scientist.

Richard Bandler enrolled as a young 20-year old psychology student in the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1970. John Grinder, in his late twenties, was an associate professor of linguistics there (reputedly the youngest in the states at the time). Bandler and Grinder soon became friends.

Soon they were applying Grinder's linguistic skills and Bandler's creative genius to 'model' or thoroughly analyse the work and the success-rate of Virginia Satir (mother of Family Therapy) and Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt Therapy). They analysed writings and tape-recordings to discover what accounted for the successful results achieved by Satir and Perls. Later, through a friend of Bandler's, they got to know and became admirers of Gregory Bateson who, in turn, introduced them to the work of Milton Erickson.

As they began to come up with ideas, insights, and techniques they tried them out on friends (including Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, Leslie Cameron, and David Gordon) who soon joined them in developing and extending the work. The enthusiastic and highly creative group grew and NLP developed.

Soon they were joined by others in the enthusiastic, visionary and creative search for what accounted for the results that people get.

And out of this search came many of the methods that are still part of good Practitioner and Master Practitioner Trainings such as *anchoring* sensory acuity and calibration, reframing, representational systems, and the two Language Models - as well as many of the personal change techniques such as the New Behavioural Generator and Change Personal History.

It became evident that highly effective communicators seemed almost able to create therapeutic magic by their adept use of language. The language patterns that emerged from this work became the *Meta Model* which was published in the first NLP book -There work culminated in the writing of several books the first of which was: *The Structure of Magic volume 1 in 1975.*

Bandler and Grinder modelled Erickson and the ways that he used metaphor and stories to induce trance and to help people remove life long phobias and overcome the effects of trauma. Their studies led to the creation of the second NLP language model - *The Milton Model* which described mechanisms for influencing people by use of particular language patterns.

The development of the Milton Model gave rise to a number of publications including, *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson MD, Volume 1 and later Volume 2 in 1977.*

2. Representational systems

Representational systems are the systems that we use to internally code and store the data that we take in through our five senses. The coded data is stored in the form of internal representations which combine to build our internal maps or models of the world.

There are four major representational systems that we use to represent our experience:-

1. **V**isual (things that we see)
2. **A**uditory (things that we hear)
3. **K**inesthetic (things that we feel)
4. **A**uditory **D**igital (things we say to ourselves in our own mind)

The olfactory (smell) and gustatory (taste) systems tend to be less used as representational systems although strong scents and odours in particular can be powerful triggers in accessing past memories. Has the scent of pine ever led you to think about Christmas?

V, **A**, and **K** are all analogue systems. Analogue systems are constantly variable (and, in theory, infinitely variable) and are measured in terms of amplitude i.e. brightness, volume, temperature, weight.

Auditory **D**igital (**AD**) is, as the name implies, a digital system in that the units of measurement are discrete values.

Binary is a good example of a digital system - it has two discrete values - 1 and 0 or On and Off.

Denary or base 10 (or decimal if you prefer), the number system that most of us are familiar with is another example of a digital system and has ten discrete values - 0 to 9.

The AD system has thousands of discrete variables in the form of the individual words that make up our language. As AD is a measurement of the words we say to ourselves in our own minds (our thoughts) it is also referred to in NLP as *self-talk*.

Representational preferences

All human beings are unique and each of us will tend to have a preferred representational system that we use to organise our experience and to construct our internal maps of reality.

Some of us will be mainly **V**isual and will find when we think about the world that our thoughts consist largely or even entirely of images - both real and imaginary. The images may be still or moving - something which we will explore more when we look at submodalities.

Some of us will have a preferred representational system of **A**uditory and will organise our thoughts around the sounds that we have heard, including words that have been spoken to us (as opposed to words that we say to ourselves in our own mind which would be classed as **AD**).

Others still will find that their preferred representational system is **K**inesthetic and they will organise their experience by how things make them **feel**.

If we consider the impact of representational preferences in conjunction with the filtering processes from the *NLP Communication Model* we can appreciate even more fully how one person's internal map of the world will differ significantly from that of another person, how the *map is not the territory.*

Three people, each with a different preferred representational system, engaging in the same experience will have very different internal representations of that single experience.

Over the next few pages we will consider how we can establish not only our own preferred representational system, but also how we can discover the preferred representational systems of other people and how we can make use of that knowledge once we have it.

Sensory predicates

One method we can use to identify the *preferred representational systems* of other people is to listen carefully to the words that they use when describing their experience of the world.

In particular we are listening for a certain class of words known as predicates and certain groupings of words known as predicate phrases.

This is another area of NLP in which your sensory acuity is particularly useful.

In traditional English grammar, a sentence is divided into two main parts:-

1. The subject
2. The predicate - that which is written or said about the subject

Here's a few examples for clarity - the predicate is underlined in each example:-

John kicked the football

Sarah listened to the rhythm of the rain beating against the window pane

He saw for the first time what had been right in front of his eyes all along

Notice that the predicates in the above sentences can be associated with certain particular representational systems - kicked (kinesthetic), listened...rhythm...beating (auditory), saw.....right in front of his eyes (visual).

During normal conversation people will use a mixture of predicate phrases, but they will tend to favour predicate phrases from one of their representational systems - **V, K, A** or **Ad**. The one that they favour is an indicator of their preferred representational system.

To illustrate, here are some examples of predicate phrases that you might hear and be able to use to identify another person's preferred representational system:-

Visual

- *That looks good to me!*
- *Let's get a bird's eye view, look at the big picture first and then we can focus in on the detail*
- *He was a sight for sore eyes*
- *The clarity of his presentation style revealed brilliant insight and really cleared the fog*

Auditory

- *That sounds great, it's music to my ears!*
- *Lend me your ear for a moment and I'm sure what I have to say will really resonate with you*
- *Take a moment to really tune in to the words I'm using and you'll get the idea loud and clear*

Kinesthetic

- *It's been a pretty bumpy ride but now I finally feel that I've made it*
- *Just the thought of it makes the hairs stand up on the back of my neck*
- *This should go smooth and steady, like a walk in the park*

- *I really want to get a handle on this and ensure I've grasped the concepts*

Auditory digital

- *If you could just describe it in a little more detail I'm sure I could make sense of it*
- *I need to process what we've just experienced in order to fully make sense of it*
- *If you're sensitive to the changes in another person you'll gain a distinct appreciation of their individual thought processes*

Eye patterns introduction

When people think about their thoughts and experiences they tend to move their eyes in certain ways. In NLP these eye movements are described as *eye patterns* or *eye accessing cues*.

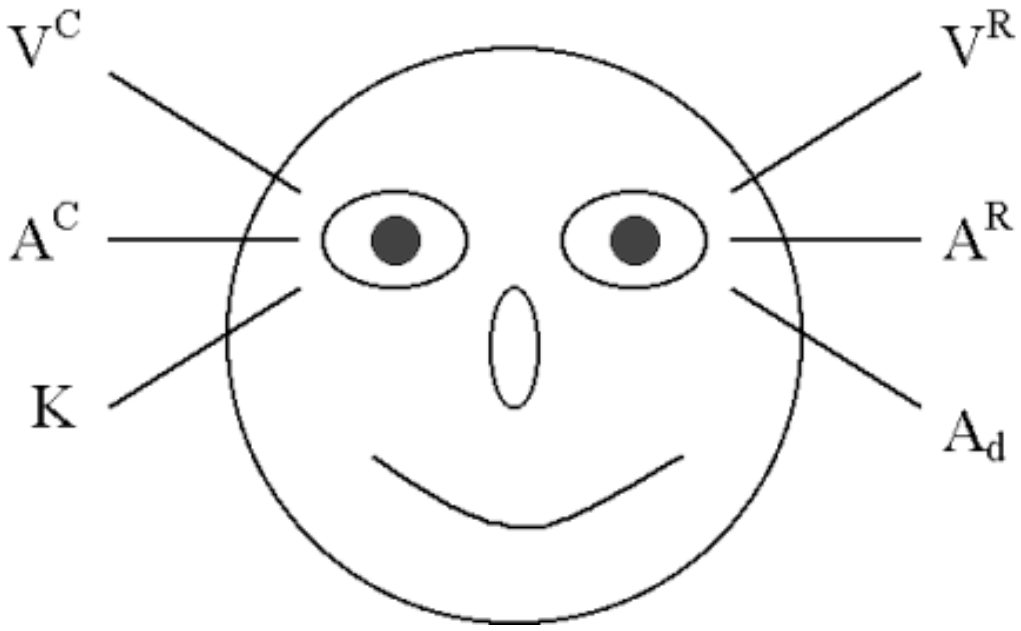
Practicing our sensory acuity by closely monitoring the eye patterns of the person we are communicating with can provide useful clues as to **how** that person is thinking from moment to moment.

We learned in the section on communication styles about the representational systems that we use to code and store our thoughts about the world.

We also learned that when we describe our experience of the world the words that we use (predicates) are influenced by those representational systems and thus can reveal our preferred representational systems When we listen to the words a person uses we are using our Auditory input channel or taking the input auditorily.

Our eye patterns are also linked to our representational systems and thus provide a second mechanism, through our visual input channel (our eyes), a way to gather useful data about a person's representations of experience and how they go about retrieving those representations (memories) when required.

Eye pattern diagram



The eye pattern diagram above represents the eye patterns of a *normally organised* or *normally wired* right handed person. By *normally organised* or *normally wired* we mean that the person is not *reverse wired* or *reverse organised* which will be covered in more detail later. For simplicity we'll give the normally organised right handed person a name by which we will refer to him subsequently - Jim.

When we think about things **visually** (or make pictures if you prefer) our eyes tend to move upward.

When Jim looks upward and to **his left** (or to the right as you look at him) he is most likely to be remembering pictures of things he has seen before. In NLP this is described as accessing Visual remembered or Visual recall (Vr).

Conversely, when Jim looks up and to **his right** (or to the left as you look at him) he is most likely to be accessing Visual construct (Vc) and constructing pictures of things he has never seen before, imagining how something could look.

When people think about things auditorily i.e. sounds including spoken words, their eyes will tend to look left and right as they look towards one ear or the other or their eyes may move rapidly from ear to ear.

When Jim looks toward **his left** ear (to the right as you look at him) he is most likely to be accessing Auditory recall (Ar) and remembering sounds he has heard before.

Conversely, when Jim looks toward **his right** ear (to the left as you look at him) he is most likely to be accessing Auditory construct (Ac) and thus imagining, or constructing, sounds he has never heard before.

In the lower quadrant Jim has Kinaesthetic (K) on **his right**, and Auditory digital (Ad) on **his left**.

When Jim looks down and to **his left** he is most likely accessing the Auditory digital channel - the channel in which he hears the words he says to himself inside his own mind or, if you prefer, hears his own thoughts. This may look/sound/feel unusual in written form but it's perfectly natural and something most people do all the time.

And last, but not least, when Jim looks down and to **his right**, or to the left as you look at him, he is most likely accessing Kinaesthetic, his feelings.

Discovering eye patterns

In a normally organised, right-handed person the eye patterns can be typically represented by the previous diagram.

Statistically most people are normally organised in that their eye accessing patterns match the diagram above.

A smaller percentage of people, including many people who are left-handed, will be reverse organised. For reverse organised people a mirror opposite of the above diagram applies - Vc, Ac and K on the right and Vr, Ar and Ad on the left.

To become highly effective in using eye patterns you should practice them until you become unconsciously competent in their use .

If the concept of eye patterns is new to you then you may be wondering just how *you can learn easily how a person is thinking* by observing their eye patterns and also distinguish if they are *normally organised* or *reverse organised*.

The answer is really quite simple and elegant - simply provide an appropriate context such that the natural response of that person is exactly the response we are looking for.

As if that wasn't simple enough, providing the right context to observe and measure a person's eye accessing cues can be as simple as asking them a few simple, well designed questions and watching where their eyes go.

We can cause a person to access particular representational systems and display the eye patterns we are looking for by asking simple questions. Here are a few example questions you could use:-

Visual recall (Vr)

- What colour was your childhood bedroom?
- What colour was your first car?
- Who were the first five people you saw today?

Visual construct (Vc)

- What would your childhood bedroom have looked like with striped carpet and polka-dot curtains?
- What would a zebra look like with yellow and green stripes?
- How would your car look with 8 wheels instead of 4?

Auditory remembered (Ar)

- Can you recall the sound of your mother's voice?
- What sound did your alarm clock make this morning?
- What does your favourite music sound like?

Auditory construct (Ac)

- Can you imagine the sound of clapping changing slowly to the sound of bells?
- What would my speech sound like if I had marbles in my mouth?
- Can you hear the sound of a harmonica and the sound of your mother's voice at the same time?

Kinesthetic (K)

- How does it feel to stand barefoot on a wet rug?
- How do your hands feel when holding a snowball?
- How does it feel to be in a nice warm bath?

Auditory digital (Ad - self talk)

- Think of the kind of things you say to yourself most often
- When you talk to yourself in your own mind, how do you know it's your own voice?

Using eye patterns

So now that we know about eye patterns and how to look for them, how is that information useful to us? How can we take the knowledge that people tend to move their eyes in certain ways depending on **how** they are thinking and do something useful with it?

Examples of uses for eye patterns include:-

- Eliciting primary representational system
- Enhancing communication
- Improving rapport
- Eliciting strategies
- Modifying strategies (eye pattern scramble)

Elicit Primary Representational System

The sections on representational preferences and sensory predicates demonstrated ways that we can listen to the types of words people tend to use so that we can establish which representational system they favour.

One question is, should we trust just one of our sensory input channels when making these distinctions? The short answer is no, we should use every scrap of information available to us through sensory acuity to enhance the quality of the distinctions we make.

If a person uses primarily visual predicates in their communication and their eye patterns are also primarily visual we have two pieces of evidence to support our assertion that their preferred representational system is visual.

Where a person's predicates and eye accessing cues mismatch i.e. are incongruent we have a unique opportunity to learn and hone our skills in order to assess their preferred representational system.

One particularly powerful use for eye patterns is to significantly enhance inter-personal communication which can in turn significantly enhance our abilities to gain and maintain rapport with the people we communicate with.

By noticing people's eye patterns as you are communicating with them you can join them in their model of the world, pace their current experience by using predicates that fit with their eye accessing cues and thus increase and deepen rapport.

Here's a few basic example scenario's to illustrate the point. We'll use a sales person (**Jim**) and a prospective client (**Sue**):-

Jim: So Sue, from our range of products our poopelwinkleblatter would be the best option for your company

Sue: (looking upwards and to her left - **Vr**) hmmm, I'm not sure Jim.

Jim: (speaking quickly) Well, if you *remember looking at the feature list you'll see* that the poopelwinkleblatter *ticks all your boxes* in terms of requirements. *Can you see* how this would benefit your company?

Sue: (looking upwards to her right - **Vc**) well, the poopelwinkelblatter would certainly *enhance our window displays*.

OR

Sue: (looking toward her left ear - **Ar**) You *say* that this will cut our manufacturing costs by 15%, *that doesn't sound* possible.

Jim: (speaking more slowly) I *hear what you're saying*, it *does sound* incredible so *let me explain* exactly how you will make those savings effortlessly. Would that be *music to your ears*?

OR

Sue: (speaking slowly and looking down and to her right - **K**) I'm not sure Jim, I still *feel uncertain*, as if something is missing from your proposal or *not quite clicking into position*.

Jim: (speaking slowly) That's OK Sue, if I were you *I'd feel exactly the same* - you need to *feel comfortable* with your purchase so let's *run through* the features and benefits one more time so you can really *get a good grasp* of what you're getting your *hands on*.

In these scenarios Jim detected **how** Sue was thinking from moment-to-moment from her eye accessing cues and matched his predicates to pace her current experience, join her in her model of the world and hence enhance his communication and the level of rapport.

There was also reference to the speed at which Jim and Sue were speaking to each other but no explanation as to the significance of the rate of their speech. So what was that all about?

Jim was utilising further knowledge that he had learned about representational preferences to further enhance his communication with Sue.

Visual people often speak very quickly. They are thinking in pictures and sometimes they think faster than they can effectively speak. The pictures move so fast that it's difficult if not impossible to vocalise every thought adequately.

Auditory people often speak a little more slowly. Often **how** they say something is more important to them than **what** they say and so they will be very precise in their vocal communication. Auditory people will take the time to ensure that you have fully heard what they want to communicate and they will think carefully about the words you use too.

Sometimes their eyes will flick left and right for several seconds as they say the words to themselves in their own mind, finally speaking only when they are happy with what they have heard. It's also fair to say that some auditory people love to hear the sound of their own voice.

Kinesthetic people often speak more slowly still. Their communication is often interspersed with pauses as they check how they feel about what you've communicated to them, and then check to feel about the response they have come up with.

Jim detected this information during his communication with Sue and modified his own behaviour to match Sue's and thus significantly enhance his communication with her.

3. Submodalities & Chunking

Submodalities are the very building blocks of experience and the basis of many of the highly elegant techniques for rapid change within NLP.

So far we've looked at how NLP can be used to enhance inter-personal communication - external communication between ourselves and other people. In submodalities we begin to focus our attention internally, to examine the concept of internal communication - how we communicate with ourselves inside our own mind. Submodality techniques can also allow us to change our internal communication to better achieve the results that we want in life, and even coach others to achieve similar results.

When we take our experiences of the outside world and transform them into our internal representations or internal maps, we code and store those experiences in our mind in certain particular patterns, but remember - the map is not the territory.

If we can take an experience and code it in one particular way, we can just as easily code it in any number of ways. If the way we've coded a particular experience proves to be less useful than we would like, why not recode the experience in a more useful way? Afterall, each of us is the cartographer of our own map of reailty and we can change the map in any way we choose that more usefully serves our purposes.

Can you think of something that you really don't like to do but have to do on a regular basis whether you like it or not? Would you like a way to transform the way you think about that thing you don't like to do so that it becomes something you really enjoy and even look forward to?

Can you think of a food or drink that you really like or even crave but, for the sake of your health/vitality/waistline should consume less of? How would you like a way to transform the way you think about that food/drink so that you like it less and your cravings become a thing of the past?

Maybe there's something that you WANT to like but you just can't bring yourself to try it, or just one negative aspect of it outweighs all the positives?

You can use submodality techniques to recode your experiences in such a way that you can make those useful changes easily, quickly and gracefully.

Submodalities defined

The presuppositions of NLP tell us that *all distinctions human beings are able to make concerning our environment and our behaviour can be usefully represented through the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, and gustatory senses*.

- or if you prefer -

Everything we do inside our mind and body can be described in terms of things we see, hear, feel, smell and taste.

In NLP the five senses that comprise our sensory input channels are also known as *modalities*.

The richness and diversity of experience available to us as human beings demands that our sensory input channels support a fine level of distinction or granularity, and thus the *modalities* are made up of smaller sub-components known as *submodalities*.

Any experience that we have in life is going to have a certain set of submodalities and the order, sequence and properties of those submodalities are the way in which we encode that particular experience as we add it to our internal map of reality.

Changing an experience in our internal map can be easily achieved by simply changing the submodalities of the experience to recode it.

For example, we can take something we dislike and change it into something we like by:-

1. Eliciting the submodalities of the thing we dislike (substance A)
2. Eliciting the submodalities of something that we like (substance B)
3. Recoding our experience of substance A by mapping onto it the submodalities of substance B

Simple, elegant and very useful.

Submodality examples

Now that we've established the basis of what submodalities are and how we can use them to make useful changes to our model of the world quickly and easily it's time to focus in on the detail by looking at some examples of submodality distinctions. As most submodality work utilises the **V**isual, **K**inesthetic and **A**uditory channels we'll stick to those for now:-

Visual

- Is the picture black and white or colour?
- Is the picture near or far?
- Is the picture 2D or 3D?
- Is it a still picture or a movie?
- Is it **associated** (you see it through your own eyes) or **dissociated** (you see yourself in the picture?
- Is it focussed or defocussed?
- Is it bright or dim?
- Is it in the centre of your field of vision or off to one side?
- Is it clear or grainy?
- Is it solid or transparent?

- Is it framed or panoramic?

Kinesthetic

- Where is the feeling in your body?
- Does the feeling stay in one place or does it move?
- If it moves, how specifically does it move?
- Is there a temperature to the feeling?
- Is there a weight or a pressure to the feeling?
- Is there a vibration to the feeling?
- What is the intensity of the feeling?
- Is the intensity constant or does it change?
- If the feeling changes, at what speed does it change?
- Does the feeling have a shape or a texture?
- Is there a rhythm to the feeling?

Auditory

- Is the sound loud, quiet or does the volume vary?
- Is it fast or slow?
- Is the sound near or far?
- If the sound moves, how specifically does it move?
- Is the sound in mono or stereo?
- Does the sound come from a particular location or direction?
- Does the sound loop? Fade in and out?
- Is there a single sound or layers of sound?
- Is the sound pronounced and in the foreground or muted and in the background?
- Is the sound a tone, a voice, musical etc?
- Does the sound have a particular speed or duration?
- Are there any pauses in the sound?

This list is very far from exhaustive - human beings can make many, many distinctions in the qualities of their subjective experience, which is one of the reasons why comparing your own experience with that of other people is so fascinating.

Chunking up and down

The NLP Communication Model introduces the concept of information being divided into chunks of variable size and the idea that the conscious mind can usefully attend to 7+/-2 (seven plus or minus two) chunks of information at any one point in time.

The hierarchy of ideas also utilises this concept of chunks of information and our ability to take such a chunk and '*chunk up*' to a higher level of abstraction, '*chunk down*' to a lower level of abstraction and even '*chunk sideways*' or laterally between two chunks at the same level of abstraction.

If we take the word *car* as an example, the word *car* is at a particular level of abstraction.

If we then chunk down on car we move to a lower level of abstraction - something more concrete and specific.

We can chunk down and gain specificity by asking '*What are examples of this?*', or '*What specifically?*'

So if the subject of the communication was *car* we might ask '*What type of car specifically?*' and chunk down to *Ford*.

If we required further detail we could chunk down one more level by asking something like '*What model of Ford specifically?*' and we might get a response of '*Mondeo*' or '*Focus*'.

In this particular example we've chunked down on the *class* or *category* of the subject in question. An alternative available to us to gain specificity is to *chunk down on parts* i.e. instead of chunking down from *Car* to *manufacturer* to *model*, we could also have chunked down from *Car* to *engine* to *spark plug*.

With each increasing level of specificity we are moving down through the hierarchy of ideas, down through levels of abstraction.

We can gain specificity in inter-personal communication by chunking down to uncover increasingly fine levels of detail by asking the questions '*What are examples of this?*' or '*What specifically?*'.

Detail and specificity are useful under certain particular circumstances and for certain applications. At the other end of the spectrum there are circumstances and applications that are better served by taking an overall or '*Big Picture*' view.

When we've been '*down in the detail*' and we want to move up to take look at the '*Big Picture*' or, if you like, take a '*bird's eye view*' of things we chunk up.

Questions that we can ask to assist us in chunking up include:-

- What is this an example of?
- For what purpose?
- What is your intention?

If we return to our previous example of *car* and chunk up one level by asking the question '*What is this an example of?*' we may chunk up to *motor vehicle*.

If we chunk up one more level by asking the question again we may chunk up to *vehicle*. Chunk up again and we may arrive at *transportation* and eventually to *movement* or even *existence*.

Each time we chunk up one level we move to a higher level of abstraction and I'm pretty sure you would agree that *existence* is a far more abstract concept than *car*.

Chunking laterally

You can significantly enhance your cognitive abilities and communication skills by developing your abilities to utilise chunking more effectively.

If you prefer plain speaking, another way to say it is that being able to chunk better will help you to think better and communicate better.

So far we've looked at chunking down to fine detail and chunking up to the big picture. You will benefit from being able to chunk up and down skilfully and you will benefit even more from being able to chunk laterally or sideways.

How do we chunk sideways? Simple - first chunk up one level, then chunk down some place else.

For example if we take the word *Painting* and chunk up one level we could chunk up to *Art*. If we then ask ourselves '*What are other examples of art?*' we could chunk down to sculpture, music, dance or any number of art forms.

By using this process of chunking up then back down we've effectively chunked sideways - in this particular context we chunked from up from painting to art, and then sideways and down again to sculpture, music, dance etc.

When we chunk sideways we begin by chunking up by one hierarchical level and end by chunking back down to the same hierarchical level we started from. Thus the chunk(s) we end with are on the same level as the chunk we started with.

Communication tends to flow better and be more useful when all of the people involved are using similar sized chunks from the same hierarchical level. This is also one of the reasons why the person controlling the level of abstraction also controls the communication.

A particularly good use of lateral chunking is in negotiation and although it wasn't stated overtly at the time we've already looked at an example of this in the *purpose frame*

When you become skilled at chunking up, down and sideways one of the things you will notice is an exponential increase in your communication skills. Another thing that you'll notice is your increasing ability to think circles around the people you communicate with.

For the time being I'm going to leave the concept of chunking here as a single building block without further explaining it's nature or it's uses.

4. Dealing with “Abreactions”

The psychoanlaytical term of Abreaction was first coined by Freud in 1893 who likened it to a cathartic release of affect occurred by bringing 'a particular moment or problem into focus'.

It used to be thought that abreaction was a vital part of therapy and the outpouring of emotion worked to release it-like releasing poison by lancing a boil. Shell shocked

survivors of WW1 treated by psychologists like William Sargent were encouraged to relive their trauma until the point of "collapse" at which point the PTSD symptoms could be removed. This worked successfully but only because the emotional collapse led to calm and when the trauma was reviewed calmly for the first time the memory trace could at last be reassigned to the less emotive memory centres-lifting the PTSD. But Its much more comfortable and effective to go directly for calm reviewing of troublesome memories which leaves the safety and dignity of the person intact.

Abreactions may be experienced for example if a flashback of a traumatic event occurs. A flashback as such, does not have the capacity to bring about processing of the memory experience, and is traumatic in itself. An abreaction, which includes the emotional reaction as well, may lead to healing and integration of the memory, but not necessarily. An abreaction may be preceded by a period of mounting internal pressure and conflict lasting for days or even weeks before the abreactive resolution itself. It is as if a part of the self who has been holding unprocessed traumatic material from the time it happened, gets closer to the surface, with an urgent need to release the experience. The internal pressure is due to an increasingly dangerous-feeling power struggle between this part and other parts who have been maintaining the dissociation.

Abreactions take several different forms but all involve some emotional reaction, often an outburst of emotion i.e. agitation, tears, anger, shouting, laughter, nausea, dizziness. Some clients may have a gentle release of tears, others a more intense or dramatic reaction. So someone may abreact if something in the environment (and remember the therapist and their words are part of that environment) reminds them unconsciously of an uncomfortable, unpleasant or even traumatic event.

If someone does abreact give them time. Don’t hurry them to open their eyes if they are closed. Give them time and space to work the emotions out so don’t rush at them with a box of tissues. Do not touch them. Find an appropriate time when the charge has begun to decrease to offer some words or tissues.

Reassure them so that they know they are in a safe environment to let out whatever it is they need to. Then get them to focus on something in the room (abreaction is a hypnotic phenomenon so we need to get them back with us) For example you might say: Okay now just take a moment to think about your breathing and notice that as it calms right down again your body and mind becomes more relaxed again..."

Use language of the less emotional, i.e. "left brain" like "think" and "notice" "weigh up" "what are your thoughts on" and so forth; and avoid emotive words like "feel" or "emotional". The much used therapeutic linguistic staple: "How do you feel" can ignite the situation by directing attention even more toward feelings when things need to be calming down. Think words mobilise the "thinking brain" (and therefore dilutes emotion) and "feel words" get the emotions going even more.

In my years of practice I have mostly encountered abreaction with childbirth issues, but not exclusively and only in the minority of cases. But if it does happen it's vital to stay cool, let the client have time to deal with it, it's amazing how fast people can calm down again.

Remember when seeing clients you should only work within your qualification framework knowledge and experience. Therefore if you have no training in dealing with severe sexual trauma for example, refer the person on to someone who has. However obviously we don’t always know this is the case when somebody comes to see us to deal with procrastination

or wanting to lose weight etc. However if an abreaction occurs unexpectedly, staying calm and dealing with the situation, as described will usually help to bring reassurance and calmness back for the client. Please remember that not all reactions are a result in the client reliving an event. It may be a sudden feeling of guilt or remorse based on an action or set of actions or from not doing something they feel that they should have. It may be the result of sheer relief from freeing the negative emotions, such as guilt or remorse that has caused a sudden physical outpouring or reaction.

The IEMT course will demonstrate a Pattern of Chronicity know as the 3 stage Abreaction. This can be one of the indicators that a person, despite what they may be saying is not happy or willing to change. This can occur for many reasons, the most obvious is that the behaviour or problem that they are exhibiting or identifying with somehow affords them some special status or attention. This is what is known as “Secondary Gain” i.e the reason that they have come to see a therapist that they wish to “change “may consciously or unconsciously be keeping them stuck in the same place. Part of them wants to let it go, but another part is quite comfortable holding onto it, e.g. a smoker says he want to give up, but part of his brain believes cigarettes are the only thing that help him to relax and thus he can’t or wont quit. When we are challenging people’s beliefs and values they are what we call “highly charged states” and thus can cause an out pouring of emotion when challenged.

IEMT can cause change rapidly. Some people may not be quite prepared for this as suddenly the comfort blanket has been removed. This may lead to the 3 stage abreaction occurring and if you miss the initial signal, the may jump straight to stage 3!

Dealing with this type of abreaction as opposed to the trauma, flashback type of abreaction is no different. Give people the time an space to do their own transderivational search of their thoughts, feelings, internal dialogue etc. Then when the emotion charge begins to dissipate use some form of interaction to bring the person back into the here and now, back to rationality and self-control. It may well be appropriate at this stage to continue with IEMT as you have possibly just hit a real nugget of change, however I always ask the client if they want to continue. Never push on regardless even if you think you are on the edge of a result. Also never force a client to disclose anything that they have experienced after an abreaction. Some will want to talk, others won’t so respect the decision. The beauty of IEMT is that is can be a completely content free modality.

References:

NLP Practitioner Syllabus - Society of NLP Richard Bandler

NLP Master Practitioner Syllbaus -Society of NLP Richard Bandler

NLP Trainer Training Syllabus - Society of NLP Richard Bandler

Handling Abreactions and Flashbacks in Therapy - Nel Walker

http://microdot.net/nlp/ - special thanks for the use of your resources.

http://www.nlp-now.co.uk/history.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abreaction

Suggested Reading:

1. The Rainbow Machine: Tales from a Neuro-linguist's Journal (Paperback) by Andrew T. Austin
http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Andrew+Austin+The+rainbow+Machine&rh=n%3A266239%2Ck%3AAndrew+Austin+The+rainbow+Machine

2. The Ultimate Introduction to NLP - Richard Bandler (link ot the book on Amazon)
http://www.amazon.co.uk/Ultimate-Introduction-NLP-build-successful-ebook/dp/B008IX5UY2/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1385212854&sr=1-2&keywords=NLP

3. NLP Workbook: A practical guide to achieving the results you want - Joseph O'Connor (link to the book on Amazon)
http://www.amazon.co.uk/NLP-Workbook-practical-achieving-results/dp/0007100035/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1385212854&sr=1-1&keywords=NLP

4. Introducing NLP Neuro-Linguistic Programming by Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour (Jan 2003)

5. Get the Life You Want: Foreword by Paul McKenna. The Secrets to Quick & Lasting Life Change by Bandler, Richard and McKenna, Paul (19 Aug 2010)

6. Richard Bandler's Guide to Trance-formation: Make Your Life Great (Book & DVD) by Bandler, Richard and McKenna, Paul (7 Jan 2010)