



LIFE COACHING

CERTIFICATION
PROGRAMME

NLP Meta Programs

Created By Kain Ramsay

NLP META PROGRAMS

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us towards a greater understanding of ourselves.” – Carl Jung

Meta-programs are discussed within the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). They are the keys to the way we process information. NLP meta-programs are basically how we form our internal representations and direct our behaviour.

In *Unlimited Power: The New Science Of Personal Achievement*, Tony Robbins (one of the founding fathers of Life coaching) writes about meta-programs that people use to sort and make sense of the world.

He defined the seven primary NLP Meta-Programs as being:

- 1) Towards or Away from**
- 2) External or Internal Frame of Reference**
- 3) Sorting By Self or Sorting by Others**
- 4) Matcher or Mismatcher**
- 5) Convincer Strategy**
- 6) Possibility vs. Necessity**
- 7) Independent, Cooperative and Proximity Working Styles**

1) Toward and Away

We can use this lens to understand whether an individual is driven by pain or gain. We can also use this for looking at ourselves. Do you tend to move towards pleasure or away from pain?

In his book, Robbins writes: “All human behaviour revolves around the urge gain pleasure or avoid pain. You pull away from a lighted match to avoid the pain of burning your hand. You sit and watch a beautiful sunset because you get pleasure from the great celestial show as day glides into night.”

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2) External and Internal Frame of Reference

If you've ever given a compliment and it seemed like the person didn't believe you, it might be because they're using an internal frame of reference. We can also check this in ourselves. For example, do you put more emphasis on how you rate your own performance or do you look to the feedback you get from other people?

Robbins writes: "Ask someone else how he knows when he's done a good job. For some people, the proof comes from the outside. The boss pats you on the back and says your work was great. You get a raise. You win a big award. Your work is noticed and applauded by your peers.

When you get that sort of external approval, you know your work is good. That's an external frame of reference. For others, the proof comes from inside. They 'just know inside' when they've done well."

3) Sorting By Self and Sorting by Others

Do you first consider what is in it for you, or would you be more inclined to think about what's in it for other people?

Robbins writes: "Some people look at human interactions primarily regarding what's in it for them, some regarding what they can do for themselves or others.

Of course, people don't always fall into one extreme or the other. If you sort only by self, you become a self-absorbed egotist. If you sort only by others, you become a martyr."

4) Matcher and Mis-matcher

Have you ever met someone that always seems like they have to disagree with you? Now you know why.

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Robbins writes: "This meta-program determines how you sort information to learn, understand, and the like. Some people respond to the world by finding sameness. They look at things and see what they have in common.

These people are 'matchers'.

Other people are mismatchers — difference people. There are two kinds of them. One type looks at the world and sees how things are different ... The other kind of mismatcher sees differences with exceptions. He's like a matcher who finds sameness with exceptions in reverse – he sees the differences first, and then he'll add the things they have in common."

5) Convincer Strategy

This meta-program involves what it takes to convince someone of something.

Robbins writes: "The convincer strategy has two parts. To figure out what consistently convinces someone, you must first find out what sensory building blocks he needs to become convinced, and then you must discover how often he has to receive these stimuli before becoming convinced."

6) Possibility and Necessity

Perhaps you know some people who are minimalists, or you might be a minimalist yourself and focus solely on what you need. Or perhaps you're a seeker who is always looking to expand your possibilities and opportunities.

Robbins writes: "Ask someone why he went to work for his present company or why he bought his current car or house. Some people are motivated primarily by necessity, rather than by what they want. They do something because they must.

They're not pulled to take action by what is possible. They're not looking for infinite varieties of experience. They go through life taking what comes and what is available. When they need a new job or a new house or a new car or even a new spouse, they go out and accept what is available."

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Others are motivated to look for possibilities. They're motivated less by what they have to do than by what they want to do. They seek options, experiences, choices, paths."

7) Independent, Cooperative and Proximity Working Styles

Through understanding this Meta-program you'll be able to figure out where your most enjoyable work environments are.

Robbins writes: "Everyone has his strategy for work. Some people are not happy unless they're independent. They have great difficulty working closely with other people and can't work well under a significant amount of supervision. They have to run their show.

Others function best as a part of a group. We call their strategy a cooperative one. They want to share responsibility for any task they take on. Still, others have a proximity approach, which is somewhere in between. They prefer to work with other people while maintaining a sole responsibility for a task. They're in charge but not alone."

We also mentioned a couple of other NLP Meta-Programs in the video lecture including:

8) Detail and Global

If an individual has a 'Detail' Program, they will be concerned with the specifics of a situation. Conversations are more likely to be long and drawn out and cover all the details. While focusing on the details, they sometimes lose sight of the bigger picture.

If an individual has a 'Global' Program, they consider situations from a big picture perspective and speak in general terms, avoiding detail. They move conversations onto different topics as supposed to spending time discussing details.

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There are several advantages of having a 'Detail' program – people like this are very comfortable working with details and very good at spotting small mistakes. They cope well with large documents and small print.

There are also several disadvantages - they can get bogged down in the details and work away happily, even though the bigger picture might have changed. They also may be perceived as pedantic.

There are also several advantages of having a 'Global' programme – people like this make a good strategist or concept creator and are excellent at generating 'big' ideas.

Disadvantages of having a 'Global' programme can be that individuals like this can appear as if they have their head in the clouds. They may feel uncomfortable engaging in a detailed conversation and get frustrated with details if there are too many ideas and little execution.

9) Proactive and Reactive

Individuals who are proactive will initiate and not wait for other people. From a reactive's point of view, they can act with little or no consideration and jump into situations without thinking things through. They are particularly good at getting a job done.

You can easily identify people like this as you'll notice that they use short sentences with an active verb. They also speak as if they're in control and have difficulty sitting still for extended periods of time. Such individuals do well in situations where something needs to be done 'now' - for example sales or project managers (where getting the job done is more important than the 'feathers that might get ruffled').

Individuals who are reactive have a tendency to wait for other people to initiate or until the situation is right. They usually spend a great deal of time considering and analysing a situation before acting.

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People like this can be identified through their use of incomplete sentences or long complex sentences. They also tend to use passive verbs and conditionals (would, should, could, might, may).

They usually speak in terms of outside forces having a large influence on their lives and relying on chance or luck. People like this are capable of sitting and analysing issues for long periods of time. Positions suited to these people would be customer service representatives or analysts.

Additional Considerations

- All NLP meta-programs are context and stress-related.
- NLP meta-programs are helpful in enabling us to calibrate and guide our communication with others. They are also a powerful tool for personal change.
- It is possible for individuals to change their NLP meta-programs by making a conscious decision to do so. If they have a way of processing the world that is limiting their success, it's possible to find a way to adapt consciously. Identifying the meta-programs that they use is a good starting point.
- By taking time to assess and calibrate those around you, you can begin taking note of specific patterns that others have for perceiving their world and therefore begin analysing if other people have similar patterns.
- This will enable you as a life coach to develop a set of distinctions in relation to other people that will help know how to best communicate with different types of people.
- Understanding Meta-programs helps you to understand how others sort and make sense of the world. They also help you understand your own values, behaviours and beliefs.
- People use a mixture of meta-programs. They are not limited to one or two but a whole spectrum of possibilities. Meta-Programmes act as a tool for understanding how and why people behave in certain ways and adapting your own behaviour to improve your communication.