NLP LISBON

FREE E-BOOK

NLP 100

100 small exercises for everyday life, at work, at home and in every conversation in between.

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BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

I wrote this book for anyone who would like to use NLP in ordinary life, at work, at home and in all the conversations in between. You do not need any NLP background to use it. Each exercise tells you when it helps, what to do step by step and a little about the idea behind it. There are 100 exercises in five chapters: your state, conversations and rapport, language and questions, beliefs and your inner voice, and goals, habits and decisions. You can read from the beginning, or open the book on any page and start with whatever catches your eye. Where an exercise builds on an earlier one, it says so. One exercise a day is enough. Try it, notice what happens and come back to it a few times before you move on. Some exercises will suit you straight away, and others will make more sense a few weeks later. Keep the ones that work for you and leave the rest for another time.

The exercises in this book are for everyday self-reflection and communication and do not replace medical or psychological help.

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CONTENTS

100 exercises

Chapter 1 · Your state: calm, focus and confidence

1 Rate your state
2 Lengthen the out-breath
3 Change your posture first
4 Switch on peripheral vision
5 Set a calm anchor
6 Test and use your anchor
7 Stack several good states
8 Recall a resource state fully
9 Circle of excellence
10 Move through a chain of states
11 Interrupt a spiral
12 Come back to your senses
13 Notice the feeling about the feeling
14 Three minutes before a meeting
15 Step out of the picture
16 A short swish
17 Collapse a small unhelpful anchor
18 Rehearse the moment ahead
19 Act as if
20 Evening state review

Chapter 2 · Conversations and rapport

21 Notice rapport before building it
22 Match posture gently and slowly
23 Match voice tempo and volume
24 Pace first, then lead
25 Calibrate a yes and a no
26 Spot the sensory words
27 Answer in their sensory language
28 Step into second position
29 Watch from third position
30 Listen without preparing your reply
31 Backtrack their key words
32 Close with a checking summary
33 Give sensory-specific feedback
34 Frame feedback with your intention
35 Catch tension as it rises
36 Chunk up to shared ground
37 Separate person from behaviour
38 Say no and keep rapport
39 Match their email style
40 Review a talk in three positions

Chapter 3 · Language and questions

41 Ask "what specifically?"
42 Always? Never? Everyone?
43 Ask "who says?"
44 Compared to what?
45 How does that cause this?
46 Ask "how do you know?"
47 Turn the noun into a verb
48 "Have to" or "choose to"
49 "I can't" and "yet"
50 Replace "but" with "and"
51 Find the hidden presupposition
52 Questions that presuppose resources
53 Ask for the outcome
54 Ask a clean question
55 What would have to be true?
56 Ask an "as if" question
57 Find a context reframe
58 Find a content reframe
59 Notice how you label yourself
60 Write an email in outcome language

Chapter 4 · Beliefs and your inner voice

61 Catch one limiting belief
62 Find where your critic lives
63 Give your critic a cartoon voice
64 Move the voice further away
65 Turn down the inner volume
66 Shrink and dim a worry picture
67 Turn up a pleasant picture
68 Find one counterexample
69 Ask your belief some questions
70 How you become convinced
71 Ask the critic for advice
72 Turn a belief into a question
73 Collect evidence for a belief
74 Answer your belief as a friend
75 Talk to yourself by name
76 Notice match or mismatch
77 Notice where your eyes go
78 Compare doubt and certainty
79 Visit your old beliefs
80 Write a belief that supports you

Chapter 5 · Goals, habits and decisions

81 Turn a wish into an outcome
82 Run an ecology check
83 Towards or away from
84 Future pace the first moment
85 Step into a future moment
86 Ask at every logical level
87 Model one thing done well
88 Find your habit's trigger
89 Break the chain early
90 The smallest next step
91 Four questions for a decision
92 What's important to you about it?
93 Collect and celebrate evidence
94 Climb the criteria ladder
95 Chunk the goal up and down
96 Find your own motivation strategy
97 Time the task you dread
98 Plan backwards from success
99 Find the habit's good intention
100 Choose your three favourites

And then

› Practise with real people

CHAPTER 1 · EXERCISES 1 TO 20

Your state: calm, focus and confidence

This chapter is about the state you are in at any given moment and how you can change it yourself. The exercises use classic NLP tools such as anchoring, physiology, submodalities and the circle of excellence. Try one at a time, and repeat the ones that suit you until they come naturally.

Rate your state

When: Use it several times a day, and especially before a conversation that matters to you.

1. Stop for a moment and ask yourself how calm you feel right now, on a scale from 1 to 10.
2. Ask the same question for focus and for confidence, and note the three numbers.
3. Notice where in your body you sense each one, for example tension in your shoulders or warmth in your chest.
4. Write the numbers down with the time and the situation.

> *In NLP, everything starts with noticing your state. After a few days many people see a pattern, such as the same dip every afternoon, and that pattern shows where the other exercises will help most.*

Lengthen the out-breath

When: Use it when you notice your breathing has become fast or shallow, for example while you read a difficult email.

1. Sit or stand comfortably and let your shoulders drop.
2. Breathe in through your nose for a count of four.
3. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for a count of six to eight, as if you were blowing through a straw.
4. Repeat this for about ten breaths, then go back to breathing normally.

> *Breathing is part of your physiology, and in NLP physiology and state affect each other in both directions. A slower out-breath is one of the simplest ways to tell your body that it can settle.*

Change your posture first

When: Use it when you feel small or tired before you speak up in a meeting or make a call.

1. Notice how you are sitting or standing right now, including your head, shoulders and feet.
2. Put both feet flat on the floor, lengthen your spine and keep your chin level.
3. Let your shoulders widen a little and your breathing move down into your belly.
4. Stay like this for one minute and notice what changes in your thoughts.

> *It is hard to feel defeated while you sit upright and open. Many people find that their voice and their choice of words change as soon as they change the way they sit.*

Switch on peripheral vision

When: Use it when you feel tense or stuck in your head, for example before a presentation.

1. Pick a point on the wall slightly above eye level and keep looking at it.
2. Without moving your eyes, start to notice what is to the left and right of that point.
3. Let your attention spread out to the edges of what you can see.
4. Stay in this wide view for one or two minutes and breathe slowly.
5. Then let your eyes move freely again.

> *Narrow, fixed vision often goes together with stress, while a wide view tends to go with feeling relaxed and alert at the same time. Many people notice that their inner dialogue gets quieter in peripheral vision.*

Set a calm anchor

When: Use it on a quiet day to prepare something you can use in stressful moments later.

1. Choose a discreet touch, such as pressing your thumb and middle finger together.
2. Remember a time when you felt really calm and step into it: see what you saw, hear what you heard, feel what you felt.
3. As the feeling builds towards its peak, apply the touch and hold it for a few seconds.
4. Let go as the feeling starts to fade.
5. Repeat this three to five times.

> *This is classic NLP anchoring. How well it works depends on how strong the state is, on timing the touch to the peak and on using exactly the same touch each time.*

Test and use your anchor

When: Use it a day after you set an anchor, and then whenever you need that state.

1. Break state first: stand up, look around the room, think about what you will have for lunch.
2. Now apply the exact touch from your anchor and wait a few seconds.
3. Notice whether the calm feeling comes back, even partly.
4. If it is weak, set the anchor again with a stronger memory.
5. Once it works, use it in small everyday situations before you rely on it in big ones.

> *In NLP, testing is part of the method. An anchor you have checked and used in small moments holds up much better when the pressure is higher.*

Stack several good states

When: Use it when you want one anchor that holds more than one resource, such as calm and confidence together.

1. Choose the knuckle of one hand as your anchor point.
2. Recall a moment of calm, step fully into it and press the knuckle at the peak.
3. Break state, then recall a moment of confidence and anchor it on the same spot.
4. Repeat with a third state, for example curiosity or humour.
5. Break state once more, then fire the anchor and notice the combined feeling.

> *Stacking anchors means placing several resource states on one point. The result often feels fuller than any of those states on its own.*

Recall a resource state fully

When: Use it when you need a particular quality, such as patience, and cannot find it in the moment.

1. Name the quality you need right now in one word.
2. Find a specific moment when you had that quality, however small.
3. Step into the memory as if it were happening now and look out through your own eyes.
4. Add detail: colours, sounds, temperature, posture.
5. Notice where the feeling sits in your body and let it grow a little.

> *In NLP a resource state is any state that helps you in a situation. Being associated, inside the memory rather than watching it from outside, is what brings the feeling back.*

Circle of excellence

When: Use it before an interview, a presentation or any situation where you want to be at your best.

1. Imagine a circle on the floor in front of you and give it a colour.
2. Recall a time you felt capable, and as the feeling grows, step into the circle.
3. Let the state fill you while you stand inside, then step out and shake it off.
4. Repeat with one or two more strong memories.
5. Finally, step in while you imagine the coming situation going well.

> *The circle of excellence is a spatial anchor. Later you can picture the circle on the floor of the real meeting room and step into it in your mind.*

Move through a chain of states

When: Use it when the state you want feels too far away, for example when you feel flat and need to start.

1. Name the state you are in now, such as bored, and the one you want, such as motivated.
2. Find two or three states in between, for example curious and then interested.
3. Recall a short memory for each, starting with the one closest to where you are.
4. Spend about thirty seconds in each memory, moving through the chain in order until you reach the state you want.
5. Then run through it once more, faster.

> *In NLP this is called chaining states. A jump from bored to motivated rarely works in one go, while a few small steps feel natural.*

Interrupt a spiral

When: Use it when you notice the same negative thought going round and round.

1. Catch the moment the loop starts and say to yourself, firmly, "Stop."
2. Do something physical and unexpected, such as standing up, clapping once or walking into another room.
3. Look up and around for a few seconds and name three things you can see.
4. Ask yourself a useful question, for example: "What would I like to happen instead?"
5. Give that question a minute before you go back to what you were doing.

> *A pattern interrupt breaks the automatic sequence of a habit. The sooner you catch the loop, the easier it is to step out of it, so practise on small loops first.*

Come back to your senses

When: Use it when you feel lost in thought and want to be present, for example before a conversation at home.

1. Name five things you can see right now, quietly in your head.
2. Name four things you can hear, near and far.
3. Name three things you can feel, such as the chair, your feet or the air on your skin.
4. Then name two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.

> *NLP calls this uptime: your attention is outside on your senses rather than inside on your thoughts. It is also good practice for sensory acuity, the skill of noticing small details in yourself and in other people.*

Notice the feeling about the feeling

When: Use it when you catch yourself annoyed at being nervous, or worried about feeling tired.

1. Name the first feeling, for example nervousness before a call.
2. Then ask: "And how do I feel about feeling nervous?" Often the answer is irritation, and that second layer makes things heavier.
3. Choose a more useful attitude towards the first feeling, such as curiosity, patience or a little humour.
4. Recall a moment when you had that attitude, then think about the nervousness again from there.
5. Notice how the first feeling changes.

> *In NLP this is known as a meta state, a state about another state. You rarely need to get rid of the first feeling, because changing how you relate to it is often enough.*

Three minutes before a meeting

When: Use it right before a meeting, a call or a difficult conversation.

1. Find a quiet spot, even a corridor, and take five slow breaths with a long out-breath.
2. Stand upright with your feet grounded and switch into peripheral vision for a moment.
3. Fire your calm or confidence anchor.
4. Decide on one simple outcome, such as "I will ask my question clearly."
5. Walk in with your attention outside, on the people and the room.

> *This routine combines physiology, anchoring and a clear outcome. With some practice it takes less than three minutes, and you can shorten it to one breath and one anchor when time is tight.*

Step out of the picture

When: Use it when you are caught up in a strong feeling, for example after a tense phone call.

1. Imagine floating out of yourself and seeing yourself from a few metres away, like a person on a screen.
2. Watch that person and the situation calmly, as an observer.
3. Notice what you can see from here that you missed while you were inside it.
4. When you are ready, float back into your body and bring the calmer view with you.

> *In NLP this is called dissociation. The feeling is still there, and the distance gives you enough room to think clearly and choose your next step.*

A short swish

When: Use it for a small recurring trigger, such as tensing up when your phone buzzes.

1. Close your eyes and picture the moment just before the old reaction starts, as a large bright image.
2. Create a second image of yourself as you would like to be, small and dark in one corner.
3. In under a second, let the small image grow large and bright while the old one shrinks away.
4. Open your eyes briefly to clear the screen, then repeat the swish five to seven times.
5. Test it by thinking of the trigger again.

> *The swish pattern teaches your brain to head in a new direction from a familiar cue. Speed and repetition matter more than effort, so keep each swish short.*

Collapse a small unhelpful anchor

When: Use it for a mild everyday reaction, such as irritation when you wait in a queue.

1. First set a strong resource anchor on your right knuckle, using two or three good memories.
2. Break state, then briefly recall the irritation and anchor it on your left knuckle.
3. Fire both anchors at the same time and hold them while the feelings mix.
4. Release the left knuckle first, and a few seconds later the right one.
5. Break state and think of the queue again to test the result.

> *Collapsing anchors lets a strong resource state meet a weaker unhelpful one. The resource needs to be clearly stronger, so start with small reactions.*

Rehearse the moment ahead

When: Use it the evening before an event that makes you nervous.

1. Fire your resource anchor or recall a strong resource state.
2. Imagine the event from start to finish through your own eyes, with that state present.
3. Include one or two tricky moments and see yourself handling them calmly.
4. Then imagine the time just after the event, looking back on how it went.
5. Notice which moment still feels uneasy and run that part once more with the resource state.

> *This is mental rehearsal with a resource state. Many people find that the real event then feels more familiar and less charged.*

Act as if

When: Use it when you want to try out a quality you do not yet trust in yourself, such as calm authority.

1. Think about how a calm, confident version of you would walk, breathe and speak.
2. For the next few minutes, act as if you already were that version, whether in a shop, on a call or at home.
3. Pay attention to your posture, pace and tone of voice rather than to your thoughts.
4. Afterwards, notice which small details made the biggest difference.

> *The "as if" frame lets you try out new behaviour before you fully believe in it. In my trainings I often see the body find the state before the mind does.*

Evening state review

When: Use it at the end of the day, for five minutes on the way home or before bed.

1. Recall the moments today when your state was good and those when it dropped.
2. For one difficult moment, ask what you could have done differently, such as breathing, posture or firing an anchor.
3. Pick one good moment from today and anchor it, so your collection of resource states keeps growing.
4. Choose one exercise from this chapter to use tomorrow.

> *A regular review is how single exercises become habits. Pick one exercise for tomorrow rather than five, so that it stays easy to remember.*

CHAPTER 2 · EXERCISES 21 TO 40

Conversations and rapport

Much of what goes wrong between people happens in ordinary conversations, at the kitchen table, on the phone or in a meeting that runs long. The exercises in this chapter train the small skills that good contact rests on: noticing, matching, listening and answering in a way that helps the other person feel understood. You can practise almost all of them while you talk, and nobody needs to know you are doing it.

Notice rapport before building it

When: Use it in any ordinary conversation to find out how connected you already are.

1. In your next conversation, watch the other person's body as well as listening to their words.
2. Notice whether your postures, gestures or breathing already resemble each other in some way.
3. Mark the moments when the talk feels easy and the moments when it feels a little stuck.
4. Afterwards, take one minute to recall what changed between the two of you when it felt stuck.

> *Rapport usually shows itself long before anyone thinks about it. Once you can see it as it happens, you have something concrete to work with, instead of a vague sense that a talk went well or badly.*

Match posture gently and slowly

When: Use it when you are talking with someone and would like them to feel more at ease with you.

1. Observe the other person's overall posture: leaning forward or back, open or closed, still or moving.
2. Let your own posture become broadly similar, after a delay of several seconds or more.
3. Keep it approximate. A rough likeness of the whole posture is enough, and copying small gestures exactly tends to feel odd.
4. Notice whether the conversation softens or flows a little more easily.

> *Matching means meeting someone in their world for a while. It stays respectful when it is subtle and done to understand them, and if it starts to feel like imitation, ease off.*

Match voice tempo and volume

When: Use it on the phone or in video calls, where the voice carries most of the contact.

1. Listen to how fast the other person speaks and how loud or soft their voice is.
2. Bring your own tempo and volume a step closer to theirs, staying within what is natural for you.
3. If they speak slowly and thoughtfully, resist the urge to fill their pauses.
4. After a minute or two, notice how they respond to you.

> *Voice carries a lot of rapport, especially when there is no picture. A fast speaker and a slow speaker can both end a call feeling slightly misunderstood without being able to say why.*

Pace first, then lead

When: Use it when someone is agitated and you would like the conversation to settle.

1. Start by matching some of their energy, with a little more pace and emphasis than usual, while staying friendly.
2. Say in words what is true for them, for example: "This has been a really frustrating morning for you."
3. Once you sense they feel heard, slow your voice and breathing slightly.
4. Notice whether they follow. If they do not, go back to pacing for a while.

> *People rarely calm down because someone tells them to. Pacing shows them you have understood, and leading only works after that, so use it to help a conversation along, never to push someone where they do not want to go.*

Calibrate a yes and a no

When: Use it in a relaxed conversation with someone you see often, such as a colleague, partner or friend.

1. Ask a few simple questions that you know will get a clear yes, such as whether they have had coffee today.
2. Watch closely: small nods, skin colour, breathing, the corners of the mouth, where the eyes go.
3. Do the same with a few questions that will get a clear no.
4. Later, when they answer something they are less sure about, compare what you see with both patterns.

> *Calibration means learning one person's own signals instead of a general list of what body language is meant to say. Treat what you notice as a question to check, never as a verdict.*

Spot the sensory words

When: Use it in meetings and calls, or while reading emails from people you work with.

1. Listen for predicates, the verbs, adjectives and adverbs that relate to the senses.
2. Visual ones include see, look, clear and picture. Auditory ones include sounds, tell and rings a bell. Kinaesthetic ones include feel, grasp, solid and heavy.
3. For ten minutes of one conversation, sort what you hear into these groups in your head.
4. Notice whether one person clearly leans towards one group, and whether that changes with the topic.

> *Most people use all of these, often with a preference that shifts with subject and mood. The point is to listen more precisely, not to label anyone as a visual or a kinaesthetic person.*

Answer in their sensory language

When: Use it when you need to explain something and want your explanation to land.

1. Notice the predicates the other person uses in their question or concern.
2. Phrase part of your answer in the same channel. To "I can't see how this works" you might reply, "Let me show you the overall picture first."
3. If someone says, "Something feels off about this plan", you might ask, "Which part feels shaky to you?"
4. Notice whether their reply comes more quickly or with less resistance than usual.

> *When your words fit the way someone is thinking about a topic, they need less effort to translate what you say. It is a courtesy as much as a technique.*

Step into second position

When: Use it before or after a conversation with someone whose reactions you find hard to understand.

1. Sit down and briefly recall the situation through your own eyes. This is first position.
2. Move to another chair and imagine being the other person in that moment, with their posture, their voice and their concerns.
3. From there, say a sentence or two as them, starting with "I". What do they want, and what worries them?
4. Go back to your own chair, shake off their position and notice what you now understand differently.

> *You can take second position and still disagree with the other person. It gives you information you cannot get from your own seat, and it often explains behaviour that looked unreasonable.*

Watch from third position

When: Use it when a conversation or a recurring argument keeps going round in circles.

1. Imagine stepping out of the scene and watching yourself and the other person from a neutral spot, like an observer standing by the wall.
2. Notice what each person is doing: tone, posture, what each of them keeps repeating.
3. Ask what this observer would suggest to the person who looks like you.
4. Take one small idea from there back into first position and try it next time.

> *Third position gives you distance and keeps you curious. Many people find it easier to see their own part in a pattern when they watch it from outside instead of living it from inside.*

Listen without preparing your reply

When: Use it in any conversation where the other person has something important to say.

1. When they start speaking, set yourself one intention: understand first, reply later.
2. Each time you catch yourself rehearsing your answer, let the thought go and come back to their words and face.
3. When they finish, leave a short pause before you speak.
4. Begin your reply with something they actually said.

> *Many people listen with half their attention already on their own response. The other person can usually tell, and that small pause shows them you were really listening to them.*

Backtrack their key words

When: Use it when someone explains a problem, a request or an idea to you.

1. Listen for the words they stress or repeat, the ones that seem to carry weight for them.
2. Summarise briefly using those exact words rather than your own synonyms. If they said "chaotic", say "chaotic", not "a bit disorganised".
3. Then check with a simple question: "Is that right?"
4. Notice how they react when they hear their own words come back.

> *A person's key words often hold a whole experience. Swapping them for your own vocabulary can sound like a small correction, while using theirs shows that you listened closely.*

Close with a checking summary

When: Use it at the end of a meeting, a call or any longer conversation where something was decided.

1. Before everyone leaves, ask: "Can I check that I have understood the main points?"
2. Give a short summary in three or four sentences, using the words that came up in the discussion.
3. Ask what you have missed or got wrong, and listen to the corrections without defending your version.
4. Write down the corrected summary and send it round if that helps.

> *Two people can remember the same conversation quite differently. A short summary at the end catches those differences while they are still easy to sort out.*

Give sensory-specific feedback

When: Use it when you need to tell someone something critical about their work or behaviour.

1. Before you speak, pick one specific observation, something a camera could have recorded, such as "the report arrived two days after the deadline".
2. Choose a calm moment and a pace that suits them, so there is some rapport before the content arrives.
3. Describe what you observed, then its effect, then what you would like instead.
4. Ask for their view and listen to it properly before you go on.

> *Feedback based on what can be seen and heard is easier to accept than a judgement like "careless", because there is less to argue about. It also gives the other person something concrete to change.*

Frame feedback with your intention

When: Use it when you want feedback to land without the other person becoming defensive.

1. Start by stating your positive intention honestly, for example: "I'd like this project to go well for you, so I want to mention something."
2. Ask whether now is a good moment, and accept it if the answer is no.
3. Keep the feedback itself to one point instead of collecting several.
4. End by agreeing on one concrete next step together.

> *A frame tells the other person how to understand what follows. When they know why you are speaking, they spend less energy guessing at your motives and more on what you actually say.*

Catch tension as it rises

When: Use it in meetings when you sense the atmosphere starting to shift.

1. Watch for early signals in the room: voices speeding up, people leaning back or folding their arms, shorter sentences, silence from someone who usually talks.
2. Notice your own body too, for example a tight jaw or shallow breathing.
3. Take one slower breath and let your shoulders drop before you say anything.
4. If it helps, describe the situation neutrally: "It sounds as if there are two quite different views here."

> *Tension is much easier to handle when you catch it early, before people have dug in. The calibration you practise with one person works with a whole group, too.*

Chunk up to shared ground

When: Use it when two people in a meeting are arguing about details and getting nowhere.

1. Ask each of them: "What would that give you?" or "What is important to you about that?"
2. Keep asking until the answers start to sound alike, for example "a launch that works" or "less pressure on the team".
3. Say that shared aim out loud so everyone hears it.
4. From there, go back to the details and look for options that serve it.

> *Chunking up moves a conversation from positions to intentions. Once people agree at that level, the discussion of details usually gets calmer, even if it is not settled straight away.*

Separate person from behaviour

When: Use it when someone has annoyed you and you are about to respond.

1. Notice the label forming in your head, such as "she is rude" or "he is lazy".
2. Translate it into a description of behaviour: "she interrupted me twice", "he has not answered the email".
3. Ask yourself what positive intention that behaviour might serve for them.
4. Respond to the behaviour you described, and leave the label out.

> *The NLP presupposition that every behaviour has a positive intention behind it does not make the behaviour acceptable. It lets you deal with what happened without attacking the person, which keeps rapport intact for the next conversation.*

Say no and keep rapport

When: Use it when someone asks you for something you cannot or do not want to do.

1. Acknowledge the person and the request first: "I can see this matters to you."
2. Say no clearly, in one sentence, without a long justification.
3. If you genuinely can, offer an alternative, such as a later date, a smaller part of the task or someone else who could help.
4. Keep your voice warm and your posture relaxed, then stop talking and let the answer stand.

> *You can say no clearly and still be friendly. Long explanations tend to invite negotiation, while a short, calm answer with real acknowledgement is usually respected.*

Match their email style

When: Use it when you write to someone new, or to someone whose replies to you feel a little cool.

1. Before you reply, look at how their message is written: its length, greeting and sign-off, and how formal it sounds.
2. Notice their key words and any sensory predicates, such as "see", "sounds" or "feel".
3. Write your reply at a similar length and level of formality, and use some of their words.
4. Keep your own content and opinion, and only adapt the form.
5. Over the next few messages, notice whether the replies become warmer or quicker.

> *Matching works in writing too. Someone who writes three lines may skim a long email, and a careful writer may find a two-word reply abrupt.*

Review a talk in three positions

When: Use it in the evening, for a conversation from the day that is still on your mind.

1. Recall one key moment from first position, and notice what you felt and what you wanted.
2. Move into second position and experience the same moment as the other person, as fully as you can.
3. Step into third position and look at both people with calm curiosity.
4. Decide what you would like to do differently next time, and picture yourself doing it in a similar situation.

> *As a short evening habit, this turns a conversation you would otherwise keep replaying into something you can learn from. Over time you start switching positions during the conversation itself.*

CHAPTER 3 · EXERCISES 41 TO 60

Language and questions

The words you choose decide where your attention goes, what feels possible and how other people respond to you. This chapter uses classic NLP language tools, from Meta Model questions to reframing and presuppositions. Each exercise helps you listen more precisely and choose your own words with a little more care.

Ask "what specifically?"

When: Use it at work, when someone gives you a vague request such as "Can you improve the report?"

1. Listen for nouns and verbs that leave out the details, like "improve", "support" or "the problem".
2. Ask one calm question: "What specifically would you like to be different?" or "How specifically can I support you?"
3. Write down the answer in the other person's words before you start working.
4. If the answer is still vague, ask once more, this time about the part that matters most to you.

> *Keep your tone curious. Several Meta Model questions in a row can feel like an interrogation, so one or two are usually enough to get the detail you need.*

Always? Never? Everyone?

When: Use it when someone says "always", "never", "everyone" or "nobody" in a conversation.

1. Notice the word and repeat it back with a gentle question: "Always?" or "Never, not even once?"
2. Ask for a counterexample: "Has there been a time when it was different?"
3. Let the other person find their own exception instead of offering one.
4. Listen to how the sentence changes once they have found it, for example from "He never helps" to "He hasn't helped this week".

> *The Meta Model calls these words universal quantifiers. Ask in a friendly tone, because a single exception is often enough to loosen a rule that felt fixed.*

Ask "who says?"

When: Use it when a judgement appears without an owner, such as "That's unprofessional" or "You shouldn't complain".

1. Listen for value statements where nobody is named as the source.
2. Ask "Who says?" or, more softly, "According to whom?"
3. Follow up with: "How do you know that this applies to this situation?"
4. Try the same with the rules in your own head, and notice whose voice you hear when you think them.

> *This pattern is known as a lost performative. Once a judgement has an owner, you can decide whether you still agree with it.*

Compared to what?

When: Use it whenever "better", "worse", "too much" or "not good enough" turns up without a clear reference point.

1. Catch the comparison word in a conversation, an email or your own journal.
2. Ask "Better than what?" or "Not good enough compared to what, or to whom?"
3. Check whether that standard is realistic for this situation and this moment.
4. Write the sentence again with the comparison spelled out, and read both versions.

> *Many self-critical thoughts compare you with an imagined ideal. Once the standard has a name, you can judge your work more fairly.*

How does that cause this?

When: Use it when someone says "You make me angry" or "This weather ruins my day".

1. Listen for sentences in which one thing seems to force a feeling or a reaction.
2. Ask "How exactly does X cause Y?" in a neutral voice.
3. Look for the steps in between, for example what the person told themselves straight after the event.
4. Try it on yourself: rewrite "He makes me nervous" as "When he speaks quickly, I start to feel nervous."

> *In Meta Model terms, this is cause and effect. The steps in between often show you where you have a choice.*

Ask "how do you know?"

When: Use it when you catch yourself or others guessing thoughts, as in "She thinks I'm lazy".

1. Notice statements about what another person thinks or feels.
2. Ask "How do you know?" or "What did you see or hear that tells you that?"
3. Separate the observation (she didn't reply) from the interpretation (she is annoyed with me).
4. If it matters, check directly with the person instead of guessing further.

> *The Meta Model calls this mind reading. Keeping what you observed apart from what you concluded prevents a lot of small misunderstandings at work and at home.*

Turn the noun into a verb

When: Use it when a conversation gets stuck on big abstract nouns like "communication", "the relationship" or "stress".

1. Spot a word that sounds like a thing but actually describes a process.
2. Turn it back into a verb and ask about it: "Who is communicating what to whom, and how?"
3. Ask what would need to happen differently in that process.
4. In your journal, rewrite "I have so much stress" as "I'm stressing myself out about..." and finish the sentence.

> *In the Meta Model these words are nominalisations, because they freeze an activity into a thing. Once it is a verb again, you can usually find something to change.*

"Have to" or "choose to"

When: Try it in the morning, or at the end of a day when your to-do list feels heavy.

1. Write down five sentences that start with "I have to" or "I must".
2. Read each one aloud, then say it again starting with "I choose to" and add your reason.
3. Notice which sentences still feel true with "choose" and which do not.
4. For the ones that do not, ask yourself "What would happen if I didn't?"

> *These words are known in the Meta Model as modal operators of necessity. Changing them leaves the task where it is, and it can change the way you approach it.*

49

"I can't" and "yet"

When: Use it when you say "I can't" about a skill, a task or a change you would like to make.

1. Catch the sentence and ask yourself "What stops me?" This is the Meta Model question for modal operators of possibility.
2. Then ask "What would happen if I could?" and give yourself a moment to picture it.
3. Rewrite the sentence with "yet" at the end: "I can't present in English yet."
4. Name one small step that would bring you a little closer.

> *"Yet" presupposes that things can change over time. One short word puts a different expectation into the whole sentence.*

50

Replace "but" with "and"

When: Use it when you write feedback, reply to an email or talk about your own progress.

1. Read through a message you are about to send and mark every "but".
2. Check what happens to the first half of each sentence, because "but" tends to cancel whatever came before it.
3. Replace it with "and" where both parts are true: "Your draft is clear, and the ending needs more detail."
4. Do the same with your self-talk: "I made progress, and there is more to do."
5. Try it in conversation for one day and notice how people respond.

> *Keep "but" where you really want a contrast. What matters is that you choose it on purpose.*

Find the hidden presupposition

When: Use it when a question or a statement leaves you feeling cornered.

1. Take the sentence and ask yourself: "What must be true for this to make sense?"
2. For example, "Why do you always leave things until the last minute?" presupposes that you always do.
3. Answer the presupposition first: "I don't think I always do. Which deadline do you mean?"
4. Write down one presupposition you find in your own thoughts today.

> *Presuppositions are the assumptions a sentence carries without saying them out loud. Once you spot them, you have more room to respond calmly instead of defending yourself.*

Questions that presuppose resources

When: Use it when you want to support a colleague, a friend or yourself.

1. Compare "Why can't you solve this?" with "What have you already tried that worked a little?"
2. Build questions that assume some ability: "When you handled something similar before, what helped?"
3. Use "when" instead of "if": "When you've finished the first draft, what comes next?"
4. Ask one of these questions in a conversation today and pay attention to the answer you get.

> *This uses presuppositions in a helpful way. The question points attention towards what the person can already do.*

Ask for the outcome

When: Use it when a meeting, a phone call or your own thinking keeps circling around a problem.

1. Notice how long the conversation has stayed with what is wrong.
2. Ask "What would you like instead?" or "What do you want to happen?"
3. Help the answer become positive and specific: "I want replies within two days" rather than "I don't want delays".
4. Then ask "How will you know you've got it?" to find the evidence.

> *In NLP these questions are part of working with well-formed outcomes. Understanding the problem still has its place, and the outcome question gives the conversation a direction.*

Ask a clean question

When: Use it when someone describes an experience and you want to understand it without adding your own ideas.

1. Listen for the person's exact words, especially metaphors such as "I'm hitting a wall".
2. Repeat their words and ask: "And what kind of wall is that wall?"
3. Follow with "And is there anything else about that wall?" or "And where is that wall?"
4. Keep your own interpretations out of the questions, and give the person plenty of time to answer.

> *These questions come from Clean Language, which keeps the questioner's assumptions out of the conversation. I suggest using only the first two for a week before you add the third.*

What would have to be true?

When: Use it when you or someone else says "That's impossible" or "That would never work here".

1. Take the objection seriously and do not argue with it.
2. Ask: "What would have to be true for this to work?"
3. Write down every condition that comes up, for example "It would need two more weeks" or "My manager would have to agree".
4. For each condition, ask whether it is already partly true, or what it would take.
5. Choose one condition to check or work on first.

> *The question turns a flat no into a list of conditions you can look at. It is a gentle kind of reframing, because it accepts the objection and uses it as a starting point.*

Ask an "as if" question

When: Use it when someone, or you yourself, answers a question with "I don't know".

1. Accept the "I don't know" without pushing.
2. Ask the question again inside an "as if" frame: "If you did know, what would the answer be?"
3. Or move the question into the future: "Imagine it's six months from now and this has been sorted. What did you do?"
4. Give the other person a moment of quiet to think.
5. Take whatever comes seriously, even if it starts with "Well, maybe...".

> *The "as if" frame takes away the pressure of having to be right. Many people find an answer once the question allows them to pretend for a moment.*

Find a context reframe

When: Use it when you or someone else complains about a quality, for example "I'm too stubborn".

1. Take the behaviour and ask: "In which situation would this be useful?"
2. Find a concrete context, for example "Stubbornness helps when you negotiate a contract."
3. Say it back to the person: "So in negotiations, that persistence could work in your favour."
4. Talk about where the behaviour fits well and where it gets in the way.

> *A context reframe leaves the behaviour as it is and looks for the place where it helps. Most qualities have such a place somewhere, and finding it makes the rest easier to talk about.*

Find a content reframe

When: Use it when a single event has only one meaning in your mind, such as "The project was cancelled, so it was all wasted".

1. Write down the event and the meaning you have given it.
2. Ask "What else could this mean?" and write down at least three other meanings.
3. For example: "I now know how to run a project of this size" or "I finally have time for the client I postponed."
4. Choose the meaning that helps you decide your next step.

> *A content reframe changes the meaning of an event while the facts stay the same. It does not deny what happened or how you feel about it.*

Notice how you label yourself

When: Try it while journaling, or after a mistake when you hear yourself say "I'm so stupid" or "I'm hopeless with numbers".

1. For one day, write down the labels you use about yourself, aloud or in your head.
2. Check whether each one describes an identity ("I am") or a behaviour ("I did").
3. Rewrite identity labels as behaviour: "I made a calculation error this morning."
4. Add one sentence about what you will do differently next time.

> *This draws on the NLP model of logical levels, in which a behaviour is usually easier to change than an identity. Keep the list for a whole week if you can.*

Write an email in outcome language

When: Use it before you send a message that asks for a change or answers a complaint.

1. Write your first draft as usual, then read it as if you were the person receiving it.
2. Mark negations and problem words such as "don't", "never", "failed" and "issue".
3. Rewrite the key sentences to say what you want: "Please send the figures by Thursday" instead of "Don't be late again".
4. Add one sentence about the shared purpose, and remove any "but" that cancels your appreciation.

> *This exercise brings together several tools from this chapter. Keep the old and the new version side by side for a while and compare the replies you get.*

CHAPTER 4 · EXERCISES 61 TO 80

Beliefs and your inner voice

This chapter looks at the things you tell yourself and the way you tell them. You will catch beliefs and ask them questions, listen to the tone and the location of your inner voice, and adjust your inner pictures until they are easier to live with. All you need is a quiet moment and, for some exercises, a pen and paper.

Catch one limiting belief

When: Use it when you notice yourself holding back from something small and want to know why.

1. Think of a small thing you have been putting off, such as calling someone or starting a hobby.
2. Ask yourself what you believe about it and finish the sentence "I can't because..." or "I'm not the kind of person who...".
3. Write the sentence down exactly as it comes, without correcting it.
4. Read it aloud once and notice whether it sounds like a fact or like an opinion.

> *At this stage you only catch the belief. Once it is on paper, it often looks smaller than it felt in your head.*

Find where your critic lives

When: Try it the next time a critical inner voice comments on something you did.

1. Pause and listen to the voice for a moment, as if it were a radio playing in the next room.
2. Notice where the sound seems to come from: inside your head, behind you, from one side or from somewhere in front.
3. Point to that place with your finger, even if this feels a little odd.
4. Notice also how close it is and whether it sounds like your own voice or someone else's.

> *In NLP these qualities are called auditory submodalities. Once you know where the voice sits, the next few exercises give you ways to adjust it.*

Give your critic a cartoon voice

When: Use it when a harsh inner sentence keeps repeating and spoils your mood.

1. Notice the exact sentence the critic says and how it sounds at the moment.
2. Now hear the same sentence in the voice of a cartoon character, a squeaky toy or a slowed-down recording.
3. Repeat it two or three times in that new voice and notice how your feeling about it shifts.
4. If you like, try a very sleepy voice or an opera singer as well, and keep the version that makes you smile.

> *The words stay exactly the same and only the tone changes. Many people find that a sentence loses its grip once it sounds silly.*

Move the voice further away

When: Use it when the inner voice feels too close and too loud, for example before a meeting.

1. Find the location of the critical voice, as in exercise 62.
2. Imagine picking the voice up and moving it slowly out of your head and across the room.
3. Keep moving it until it sounds like a small radio on a distant shelf.
4. Notice at which distance it is easiest to stay calm, and leave it there.
5. Think of the situation again and check how you feel now.

> *Distance is one of the most useful submodalities to play with. You can also try placing the voice behind you or down by your elbow and compare the effect.*

Turn down the inner volume

When: Use it when your thoughts feel noisy, for example while you are trying to concentrate or fall asleep.

1. Notice the voice or the chatter in your head and give its loudness a number from one to ten.
2. Imagine a volume control in front of you, perhaps an old radio knob or a slider on a phone.
3. Turn it down one step at a time and let the voice become quieter with each click.
4. Stop when it reaches a level you can easily ignore, maybe a two or a three.

> *You do not need complete silence in your head. A softer background voice is usually enough to let you get on with what you are doing.*

Shrink and dim a worry picture

When: Try it when a small everyday worry shows up as a picture, such as an overflowing inbox or a messy room.

1. Notice the picture and how large it is and how close it seems.
2. Push it slowly away from you until it is the size of a postage stamp.
3. Turn the brightness down and let the colours fade towards black and white.
4. If it is a moving film, freeze it into a still image.
5. Think of the worry again and notice how strong the feeling is compared with before.

> *These qualities are called visual submodalities. Keep this for ordinary worries: the aim is to make the picture easier to look at, so you can decide calmly what to do next.*

Turn up a pleasant picture

When: Use it when you would like more of a good feeling, for example before you start your day.

1. Recall a pleasant moment from the last few weeks, perhaps a nice meal or a good conversation.
2. See the picture in your mind and notice its size, brightness and distance.
3. Make it bigger, bring it closer and turn up the colours a little.
4. Add any sounds that belong to it and let them be clear.
5. Notice how the feeling changes and find the setting you like best.

> *This is the reverse of exercise 66. Knowing that you can turn pleasant pictures up gives you a simple tool for any ordinary day.*

Find one counterexample

When: Use it when a belief about yourself starts with "I always" or "I never".

1. Take the belief you wrote down in exercise 61, or a sentence like "I'm never on time" or "I always forget names".
2. Search your memory for one single occasion when the opposite was true.
3. Recall that moment in some detail: where you were, what you did and how it went.
4. Write the counterexample directly under the belief.
5. Rewrite the belief so that it includes the exception, for example "I'm sometimes late, and last Tuesday I was early."

> *One counterexample is enough to show that the belief has exceptions, and a belief with exceptions is much easier to work with than one that seems absolute.*

Ask your belief some questions

When: Use it when a belief feels solid and you would like to look at it from a few angles.

1. Write the belief down in one sentence.
2. Ask "How do I know this is true?" and note what evidence you actually have.
3. Ask "What would happen if I stopped believing this?" and then "What would not happen?"
4. Ask "Is this always true, or only in certain situations?"
5. Read your answers and notice which one shifts your view the most.

> *These questions draw on the Meta Model and on classic NLP belief work. They invite curiosity instead of an argument with yourself.*

How you become convinced

When: Use it when you wonder why you trust some people quickly and others slowly.

1. Think of something you are now sure of that you once doubted, such as a colleague being reliable.
2. Ask yourself what convinced you: seeing it, hearing about it, reading it or doing it together.
3. Then ask how often or how long it took: once, a few times or several weeks?
4. Write your answer as a short rule, such as "I need to see it three times."
5. Notice where this rule helps you and where it makes you wait longer than necessary.

> *NLP calls this your convincer strategy. It explains why some new beliefs take time, and shows you how much evidence you need to collect.*

Ask the critic for advice

When: Try it when your inner critic keeps pointing out mistakes and you feel stuck.

1. Listen to what the critic says and ask it quietly, "What do you want for me?"
2. Wait for an answer, which is often something like "I want you to be prepared" or "I don't want you to look foolish".
3. Thank the critic for that intention, even if its tone has been unpleasant.
4. Ask it, "Can you tell me what to do instead, in a friendly way?" and notice what comes.

> *This applies the idea of positive intention to your inner voice. Once its purpose is acknowledged, the critic often starts to sound more like a helpful adviser.*

Turn a belief into a question

When: Use it when a belief sounds like a closed door, such as "I'm bad at languages".

1. Write the belief down exactly as you would say it.
2. Turn it into a "how" question that points forward: "How could I get a little better at languages?"
3. Write down three possible answers, even small or silly ones.
4. Pick one answer and ask, "What would be the first step?"
5. Read the belief and the question one after the other, and notice which one leaves you more room.

> *When a belief is phrased as a statement, there is little you can do with it. Phrased as a question, it gets your mind looking for answers, and you do not have to believe the opposite yet.*

Collect evidence for a belief

When: Use it over one week when you want to strengthen a belief that would serve you better.

1. Choose a new belief in simple words, for example "I handle surprises well" or "People enjoy talking to me".
2. Write it at the top of a page or in a note on your phone.
3. Each evening, take two minutes to write down any moment from the day that fits the new belief, however small.
4. At the end of the week, read the whole list in one go.

> *Your attention tends to pick up whatever you ask it to look for. Giving it a new belief to watch for is a gentle way to update what you think about yourself.*

Answer your belief as a friend

When: Use it when a belief about yourself feels heavy and you cannot see past it.

1. Write the belief down, for example "I always mess things up."
2. Imagine a good friend saying exactly this sentence about themselves.
3. Notice what you would want to say to them, and write it down in the words you would actually use.
4. Read your answer aloud, this time as if it were meant for you.
5. Notice which parts of it you can accept for yourself, even partly.

> *Most people are fairer to a friend than to themselves. Switching places like this gives you the fairer view that you usually keep for other people.*

Talk to yourself by name

When: Use it when your inner voice gets stuck in "I" sentences, such as "I can't do this" before a task.

1. Notice the sentence your inner voice is saying in the first person.
2. Say it again silently, using "you" or your own first name, as if you were talking to a friend: "You can take this one step at a time."
3. Keep the tone calm and practical, like a good coach before a match, and give yourself one clear instruction.
4. Notice whether you feel a little more distance from the worry.

> *Talking to yourself in the second person puts a small step of distance between you and the feeling. It works well together with the voice exercises earlier in this chapter.*

Notice match or mismatch

When: Use it when you hear a new idea and want to know how your inner voice usually reacts first.

1. The next time someone tells you about a plan or an idea, notice your very first inner comment.
2. Does it point to what is similar, such as "That's like last year's plan", or to what is different, such as "Yes, but that won't work here"?
3. Keep a tally for a day or two.
4. If you mostly notice differences, try looking for one similarity first, and the other way round.

> *In NLP this is called a sameness or difference pattern, often shortened to match and mismatch. Neither is better, and knowing your habit helps you understand why some conversations turn into debates.*

Notice where your eyes go

When: Use it out of curiosity, when you are thinking something over or talking to yourself.

1. Ask yourself a few simple questions, such as "What colour was my first school bag?" or "How does my favourite song begin?"
2. After each one, notice where your eyes moved before you answered: up, to the side or down.
3. Write down any pattern you find in yourself.
4. If a friend agrees to play, ask them the same questions and simply notice their eye movements without drawing conclusions.

> *The NLP eye accessing model links eye movements with seeing, hearing, inner dialogue and feelings. Patterns differ from person to person, so use it to get curious about how you think, never to read someone's mind.*

Compare doubt and certainty

When: Use it when you are curious how your mind codes something you are sure of compared with something you doubt.

1. Think of something you are completely sure of, such as "the sun will rise tomorrow", and notice the picture that comes with it, including its size, position and brightness.
2. Now think of something you doubt, such as "it will rain on Thursday", and notice the same qualities.
3. Write down the differences between the two pictures.
4. Take a small new belief you would like to hold and, as an experiment, give its picture the qualities of the certain one.

> *This is a light version of submodality belief change. Keep it to small, friendly beliefs.*

Visit your old beliefs

When: Try it on a quiet evening when you want to remember that beliefs can change.

1. Write down three harmless things you believed as a child and no longer believe, such as "I will never like olives".
2. For each one, recall roughly when and how it changed.
3. Notice whether the change came through a new experience or through someone's argument.
4. Ask yourself which of your current beliefs might one day join this list.

> *Choose light, everyday examples for this one. Seeing how easily some beliefs changed in the past can make your current ones feel less fixed.*

Write a belief that supports you

When: Use it to bring the exercises of this chapter together.

1. Take a limiting belief from an earlier exercise and ask, "What would I prefer to believe instead?"
2. Write the new belief in positive words and in the present tense, for example "I learn new things at my own pace".
3. Check whether it feels believable and whether it fits with the people and things you care about.
4. Adjust the wording until it feels right, then read it aloud once a day for a week.

> *Keep the sentence short enough to remember easily. If any part of you objects, listen to it and adjust the belief instead of overriding it.*

CHAPTER 5 · EXERCISES 81 TO 100

Goals, habits and decisions

This last chapter is about where you want to go and the small steps that take you there. You will set goals you can actually check, change habits at the moment they start and make decisions with a calmer head. Pick the exercises that fit the week you are having and leave the rest for later.

Turn a wish into an outcome

When: Use it when you catch yourself wishing something were different.

1. Write the wish down, then rewrite it as what you want instead of what you want to stop. "Less stress at work" could become "Leave the office by six with tomorrow planned".
2. Check that the outcome depends on you. If it needs someone else to change, find the part you can do yourself.
3. Ask how you will know you have it: what will you see, hear and feel at that moment?
4. Add when and where it applies, so the outcome has a clear context.

> *This is a short version of the well-formed outcome questions. I use them in almost every coaching session.*

Run an ecology check

When: Use it before you commit to a goal, a new habit or a big yes.

1. Name the goal in one sentence and imagine you have already reached it.
2. Ask yourself what you would lose or have to give up once you have it. Think of time, people, comfort and old routines.
3. Notice whether any part of you hesitates. A tight feeling or a quiet "but" counts as information.
4. Adjust the goal until the hesitation settles, for example by changing its size, its timing or the way you go about it.

> *In NLP, ecology means checking how a change fits the rest of your life. A goal that fits tends to be easier to keep.*

83

Towards or away from

When: Use it when you keep starting and stopping something.

1. Take one goal and ask yourself why you want it. Write down the first three answers that come.
2. Mark each answer with a T if it moves towards something you want, or an A if it moves away from something you dislike.
3. If you see mostly A, add one clear towards reason. If you see mostly T, add one honest away-from reason for slow days.
4. Read all your reasons aloud and notice which reasons give you energy right now.

> *Away-from motivation often fades once the discomfort gets smaller. A mix of both directions usually keeps you going for longer.*

Future pace the first moment

When: Use it once you have decided on a change and want it to show up in real life.

1. Think of the next real situation where the new behaviour is needed, such as tomorrow's meeting or this evening in the kitchen.
2. Picture that moment in detail: where you are, who is there, what you hear just before you act.
3. Now see and feel yourself doing the new thing there, calmly and in your own way.
4. Pick a cue from that scene, maybe a door handle or a phrase, and link it to the new behaviour.

> *Future pacing connects a change to a concrete moment ahead. The more specific the scene, the easier it is to remember.*

Step into a future moment

When: Use it when a goal feels abstract or far away and you want to sense what it is like.

1. Imagine a line on the floor that stands for your time, with the past behind you and the future in front.
2. Choose a point on the line where your goal is reached, walk there slowly and stand in that spot.
3. Look around from there. What do you see, what do you hear, how does your body feel?
4. Turn and look back towards today, then notice what advice this future you would give.

> *Timeline work uses physical space to make time easier to think about. Walk back to today before you carry on with your day.*

Ask at every logical level

When: Use it when a goal keeps stalling and you cannot tell where it is stuck.

1. Write your goal at the top of a page. Below it, list six headings: environment, behaviour, skills, beliefs, identity and purpose.
2. Ask one question per level: where and when, what will I do, what do I need to learn, what do I believe about this, who am I when I do it, and what is it for?
3. Answer quickly, one line each.
4. Circle the level where your answer felt weakest and choose one action there.

> *The logical levels model shows whether a block sits in your schedule, your skills or your beliefs, so you stop pushing where nothing is stuck.*

Model one thing done well

When: Use it when you see someone handle a situation in a way you would like to learn.

1. Choose one specific skill, for instance how someone says no politely or starts a presentation calmly.
2. Watch them closely the next time they do it. Notice posture, breathing, tempo and the words they use.
3. If you can, ask them what they pay attention to and what they say to themselves just before.
4. Try their sequence yourself in a small, low-pressure situation and notice what changes.

> *Modelling is at the heart of NLP. Start with one small skill rather than trying to copy a whole person.*

Find your habit's trigger

When: Use it when you want to change a habit and are not sure where it starts.

1. Pick one habit you would like to change, such as reaching for your phone at your desk.
2. For the next day, each time it happens, note what came just before it: a place, a time, a feeling or a sound.
3. In the evening, look at your notes and find the cue that shows up most often.
4. Write the chain down as a simple line: cue, then thought, then action.

> *Habits usually run as a sequence, and the trigger is the first link. Once you can see it, you know where to step in.*

Break the chain early

When: Use it once you know the trigger of a habit you want to change.

1. Take the chain you found and look at the very first link, the trigger.
2. Choose a small interruption for that exact moment, such as standing up, breathing out once or putting your hand flat on the table.
3. Decide what you will do instead, right after the interruption. Keep it short and easy.
4. Practise the new sequence three times now, slowly, while you imagine the trigger.

> *This works on the same idea as a pattern interrupt. The earlier in the chain you step in, the less effort it takes.*

The smallest next step

When: Use it when a task feels so big that you keep putting it off.

1. Write the task down as it sits in your head, for example "sort out my finances".
2. Ask yourself what the very first physical action would be. Make it smaller until it takes less than five minutes.
3. If you still hesitate, make it smaller again, such as opening the folder or writing the subject line of one email.
4. Do that step now, then decide whether to take the next one.

> *Chunking down is a basic NLP move. Starting often brings more energy than planning, so keep the first step very small.*

Four questions for a decision

When: Use it when you are going round in circles over a yes or a no.

1. Write the decision at the top of a page, for example "take the new job".
2. Answer four questions in turn: What will happen if I do it? What will happen if I don't? What won't happen if I do it? What won't happen if I don't?
3. Give yourself two minutes per question and write whatever comes.
4. Read your answers and mark the one that surprised you most.

> *These are often called Cartesian questions. The last one sounds odd on purpose, and it tends to bring up what you had not considered.*

What's important to you about it?

When: Use it before a decision, such as choosing between two jobs, two flats or two courses.

1. Ask yourself, "What's important to me about this?" and write down the first answer.
2. Keep asking, "What else is important to me about it?" until nothing new comes, usually after six to ten answers.
3. Use the words that come to you, such as "freedom", "people I like" or "learning something new".
4. Read the list and mark the three answers that matter most.
5. Now look at each option and check how well it serves those three.

> *In NLP these words are called values or criteria. A choice that fits your own values is usually easier to stand by when things get difficult.*

Collect and celebrate evidence

When: Use it when you are working on a goal and feel you are not getting anywhere.

1. Look back at the evidence you defined for your goal in exercise 81: what you would see, hear and feel.
2. Write down every small sign from the past week that points in that direction, even if it seems minor.
3. For each one, pause and let yourself enjoy it for a few seconds. A small smile or a nod is enough.
4. Keep the list somewhere you will see it again.

> *Noticing progress on purpose gives your motivation something real to hold on to, especially in weeks when the goal itself still feels far away.*

Climb the criteria ladder

When: Use it when you cannot tell which of your values matters most in a decision.

1. Take one value, for example "a good salary".
2. Ask, "What would make me say no, even with a good salary?" and write down the answer, such as "a team I don't trust".
3. Then ask, "What would make me say no, even with a team I trust?" and keep going.
4. Stop after four or five steps, or when an answer would outweigh all the others.
5. Read the ladder from your last answer back to your first, and check the options against it in that order.

> *NLP calls this a criteria ladder. It shows how your values rank against each other, which a simple list cannot do.*

Chunk the goal up and down

When: Use it when a goal feels either too vague or too narrow to get excited about.

1. Write your goal in the middle of a page.
2. Chunk up by asking what this will give you. Ask again of the answer, until you reach something that matters to you.
3. Chunk down by asking what exactly this involves. Go on until you reach a concrete action.
4. Read the page from top to bottom and notice how the small action connects to the bigger purpose.

> *Chunking up gives you the reason, and chunking down gives you something to do today. With both on one page, a goal is easier to start and easier to keep.*

Find your own motivation strategy

When: Use it to get started on something you keep putting off.

1. Recall a time you got yourself to do something you did not feel like doing, such as tidying the kitchen late at night.
2. Go through it slowly: what did you see, hear, say to yourself or feel just before you got up?
3. Write the steps down in order, for example: saw the dishes, pictured a clean kitchen, said "just ten minutes".
4. Try the same sequence on the task you are putting off now.
5. If it does not work straight away, change one step.

> *In NLP this is called eliciting a strategy. Your own sequence often works better than outside advice, because your mind already knows it.*

Time the task you dread

When: Use it for a small task you keep postponing because it feels as if it will take ages.

1. Write down how long you think the task will take, such as filing receipts or answering one awkward email.
2. Set a timer and start.
3. Stop the timer when you finish and compare the real time with your guess.
4. Note how the task felt halfway through compared with how it felt beforehand.
5. Keep a short list of these comparisons for a week.

> *NLP talks about time distortion: your sense of time changes with your state, and dread tends to stretch a task before you have even started. A few real numbers in front of you make the next start easier.*

Plan backwards from success

When: Use it when you know the goal but not the route to it.

1. Imagine the day you reach your goal. Step into it and let it feel real for a moment.
2. From there, ask what happened just before this, and write the answer down.
3. Keep asking the same question, step by step, until you arrive at something you could do this week.
4. Read the list in the forward direction and put the first step in your calendar.

> *Looking back from an imagined future often makes the steps clearer than planning forwards from today. It uses the same idea as timeline work.*

Find the habit's good intention

When: Use it when you keep doing something you have decided to stop.

1. Name the behaviour, for instance snacking late at night or saying yes to everything.
2. Ask yourself what it does for you. Keep asking "And what does that give me?" until you find a positive purpose, such as rest, comfort or being liked.
3. Think of at least three other ways to serve that purpose that suit you better.
4. Pick one and try it the next time the old behaviour starts.

> *NLP assumes that every behaviour has a positive intention behind it. When you keep the intention and change the method, the old habit has less to fight for.*

Choose your three favourites

When: Use it now, as you finish the book, and again whenever you need a fresh start.

1. Leaf back through the chapters and mark the exercises that helped you or made you curious.
2. From those, choose your three favourites and write their numbers and titles on one card.
3. Next to each, write when you will repeat it: a weekday, a time of day or a specific situation.
4. Put the card where you will see it every day, and look at it again in one month.

> *A few exercises you practise often will usually help you more than many you try once. Come back to this book whenever you want to swap one of your favourites for a new one.*

AND THEN

Practise with real people

If you have read this far, you have probably tried a few of the exercises on your own. Many of them get easier, and more interesting, with other people, because you get feedback and see how differently others react. If you would like to practise with real people, I run the free NLP Practise Evenings in Lisbon. You can come without any experience, try exercises like the ones in this book and ask your questions. If you want to learn NLP properly, there is the NLP Practitioner Certification in Lisbon. It takes seven days and leads to a certificate from the Society of NLP. You will find all the details on nlplisbon.com. Thank you for reading, and enjoy practising.

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NEXT STEPS

Free NLP Practise Evenings in Lisbon

Two hours, a small group, in English. Newcomers welcome.

NLP Practitioner Certification in Lisbon

Seven days of live practice, Society of NLP certificate.

Dates and details: nlplisbon.com

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