

**Note: This originally appeared as a three-part series, in *Alternatives* (a local New Orleans paper), in the March, April and May, 1991 issues.**

## **NLP: BELIEFS, CONGRUENCY & BEHAVIOR**

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How well do you live your beliefs? In other words, how well do you congruently put into action what you say you believe? Do you "walk your talk," or are you too busy talking it?

In NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) we've been spending the last five years or so studying the structure of beliefs and how they affect us. There are two wonderful new books available from Robert Dilts on the structure of beliefs, how they are developed, their effects, and how to change them. In this series of short articles I want to go over some of the basic beliefs of NLP itself, which I expect are shared by many of the readers of *Alternatives*. Also, I have developed a little quiz for you to ask yourself about how well you follow, in your behavior, the beliefs I have listed here.

One way to begin to understand NLP, even without getting into the rather sophisticated technology itself, is to explore our basic assumptions, or presuppositions, that underlie the model. These presuppositions are a useful way of thinking about

people, their problems, communication, needs and values. Sometimes just this new point of view will be enough to change your thinking about a particular problem or issue, and take, now, whatever action is necessary to make reparations. As you look over each of these statements, think about it carefully. It is not necessary that you agree with every one of them. In NLP we always invite you to try them on; to act as if they are true for a time, and see, hear and feel the result. Here is the list, with a bit of explanation, and some pointed quiz questions, about each. There is no reward, other than a better life, for doing well with the questions. The correct answers can be found in your head.

### ***The map is not the territory.***

This is a fancy way of saying that our beliefs and ideas about how people, life, and the world work aren't necessarily accurate. They are just a guide, or map, of how things work. When you go to a restaurant, don't eat the menu.

#### *Questions:*

1. When was the last time you realized something you believed, was incorrect? How did you handle it, and change your thinking?

2. Can you remember a time when you expected something to occur, and something very different happened instead? How did you adjust to this difference between expectations and actuality?

3. Have you ever found yourself disagreeing, or even arguing, with someone about some theoretical issue you had little or no direct experience about? Were you able to "catch" yourself and admit that your ideas were just that, only ideas? Did you interrupt the argument and agree that the two (or more) of you simply had different viewpoints, each of which could enrich you?

4. Do you find changing your beliefs and expectations easy? How have you managed these changes when you've done them well?

***All behavior has some "positive" intention.***

No matter how weird you think people's (or your own) behavior is, there is some good reason behind it. Sometimes you have to do a great deal of questioning and thinking to get it to make sense, but with patience and perseverance it will. Most people who have, or spend time with, children have noticed that when you ask them to explain their strange thoughts or behavior, they often give you an answer that makes so much sense you have

to ask yourself: "How come I didn't think of that?"

*Questions:*

1. When you've been confronted with situations in which someone acted in a way in which you didn't approve, how have you managed to step back from the situation and make sense of it?

2. Have you ever asked the question: "How is it possible that this person could think or behave in this way, and under what circumstances would it make perfect sense to do so?"

3. If you were to imagine that you could see the world with the innocence and naivete of a child, how would it look different, and how would you change to adjust?

4. When was a time in your life when you thought someone was doing something to hurt you, but later realized they were really intending to help?

***The meaning of any communication is the response it elicits, regardless of the communicator's intent.***

It is really easy to blame others for misinterpreting what you want them to do. Good communicators, however, take responsibility for getting others to understand them, and respond accordingly. People respond to what they think they hear, see, or understand. This doesn't just mean the words that are used, either. Always remember that we communicate on many different levels at once, both verbal and non-verbal.

*Questions:*

1. Can you think of a time when you gave someone careful instructions and they did something totally different than what you meant? Could you later, with clear hindsight, understand how that person could have done what they did, based on another possible meaning in your communication?
2. Can you remember an occasion in which you responded with anger to someone, only later to realize that you had misunderstood them? Did you promise that person, or yourself, to more carefully work to understand from now on?
3. Have you ever made the conscious decision to be the best communicator you can possibly be?
4. What would your life be like if you made the assumption that people responded appropriately to you all the time? Would it make you figure out how you get them to do the things they do, regardless of your actual intent? Would it make you think differently, and understand people much better?

Next issue we'll continue with more basic assumptions about life, and questions to motivate you to put into your behavior exactly what you believe.

*In the last issue [what you see above, here] I introduced some of the basic presuppositions, beliefs if you will, of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Each of these is accompanied by some questions to test, and motivate yourself. You may want to review those, to remind yourself of the changes you can make in your thinking and behavior, now.*

***The mind/body relationship is cybernetic, a change in one part of the system will affect other parts.***

Most people realize that our thinking affects us physically, even to the point of allowing us to become sick, or well. By the same token, if we are not healthy, or even

comfortable, we won't think very well. If we can control our physical and mental processes effectively, there is little we can't do. And let's not forget our immediate surroundings, our environment. We should live in one that is supportive of who we

are and what we need, both individually and collectively.

*Questions:*

1. How long has it been since you stopped to "take stock" of how you run your life, and your health?

2. What changes would you need to make in your thinking, the way you treat your physical needs, or your environment to give yourself every opportunity to live life to its fullest and healthiest?

3. When has there been a time when you realized the importance of using your thinking to control your physical well-being?

4. How do you insure that you get a good diet, enough exercise, plenty of rest, and lots of healthy stimulation to keep vital?

***There are no mistakes, only feedback.***

Every thing we do, successful or not, can be learned from. If we take results as feedback, rather than failure, they can teach us a lot about how to behave and live. People who kick themselves for their mistakes usually don't take the time to carefully analyze the causes and effects of their behavior, in each area of their lives. That means they don't learn all they can. To paraphrase a well-known statement, those who don't learn from their own history are condemned to repeat it.

*Questions:*

1. When was the last time you found yourself consoling a friend or loved one who had screwed something up? Did you notice how you did this with an attitude of support, without harsh judgment, realizing that, even though the outcome may have been lousy, the

intentions of this person were worthwhile?

2. Have you ever done the same thing for yourself?

3. What were your biggest "life lessons"? The ones that have shaped you in the most positive ways?

4. Have you ever heard, or said to someone else: "Someday you'll look back on all this and laugh?" Why wait?

***Everyone has all of the internal resources they really need—which doesn't mean they couldn't use a little help finding them.***

People are resilient. They are smart. They are capable. When they don't seem to be any of these things, it is because they are not in touch with their internal resources and strengths. The best help seems to be the kind that allows people to find their own answers, strengths, and abilities—and use them.

*Questions:*

1. We've all had the experience of doing something foolish, or seeming to forget how to do something we really know well. Later, when the situation has passed, we realize that we knew exactly what to do, but were just too flustered at the time to gather our wits about us. After those times have you ever stopped to "program" yourself (in whatever way you do this) to make sure that you would do better if the situation ever arose

again?

2. Have you ever forgotten something, perhaps someone's name, or another important piece of information, only to "spontaneously" remember it at a later time? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be so in tune with your unconscious processes that you

would be able to remember these things when you need them?

3. How much time do you spend actually planning how you would handle difficult situations? Do you vividly imagine these things occurring, and feel the feelings you would have if you smoothly, effectively and gracefully moved through these difficulties?

4. Do you often imagine that each day you'll have more and more of your abilities and resources available to you, automatically?

***All the information you need can be obtained through clear and open sensory channels.***

We all know that we sometimes look around wildly, and needlessly, for that which is right in front of us. Whether this is our car keys, the pencil we just put down, the right person for the job, or a new idea; if we pay attention we will find it. If we don't, we won't.

*Questions:*

1. Do you realize that people tell you and show you everything you need to know to deal with them effectively, so that both you and they can benefit from being together?
2. Have you ever had an experience in which time itself seemed to slow down to the point that you were able to see and hear much more than you seem able to normally?
3. When was the last time you stopped to just look and listen, when you needed to make a change? Did you notice new things when you did this? Things that made a real difference for you?
4. What would your life be like if you easily noticed all of the subtle cues and messages others around you gave out in their everyday communication?

Next issue we'll continue with more basic assumptions about life, and questions to motivate you to put into your behavior exactly what you believe. Perhaps you are already making changes, now, based on asking yourself these questions.

*In the last two issues [the article up to this point, here] we've looked over some of the basic presuppositions, beliefs if you will, of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. These are presented along with some questions to evaluate yourself. You may want to review those last two issues, to remind yourself of the broad changes you can make, now. Here, in our final installment, are some of the most far reaching of these basic beliefs. Ones that will help you decide who you really are, and who you want to be.*

***The law of requisite variety: The part of any system with the most options in its behavior will be the part that is in control of the system.***

Flexibility = options = control. Simple. This goes along nicely with the next one, as well.

***A change agent (communicator, everyone) needs three characteristics:***

1. *Flexibility* of behavior to elicit any response.
2. The *sensory acuity* to notice the response(s) to that behavior.
3. The *good judgement* to know whether the responses are worthwhile eliciting in the first place.

Many problems are the result of repeatedly doing the same things, over and over, whether they work or not. The old saying, "if at first you don't succeed, try try again" needs to have more added to it. Perhaps, "try try again, in a new and different way." Flexibility. Also, especially when trying something new, you have to pay close attention to see the results. This goes for people and things. Finally, you need to keep in mind that

just because you can get something done, doesn't make it a good idea. It needs to be considered in relationship to all the other things that it can effect.

#### *Questions:*

1. When have you realized that, though you were trying your best, you were doing something that, fundamentally, wasn't going to work? How did you adjust your actions?
2. Have you ever had the opportunity to be "tested" by life in a way that demanded extreme flexibility on your part? Did it make you better able to handle difficulties creatively?
3. If you had to "let go" of one overly rigid thinking pattern or behavior, today, which one would it be?
4. When was the last time you stopped something that seemed to be working just fine, simply to question your own judgment and motives about whether it was really worthwhile?

#### ***Resistance is a sign that:***

1. Rapport has not been effectively established or maintained.
2. Objections have not been properly considered and addressed.

People often complain that others don't, or won't go along with their ideas. These are the two reasons. You have to establish rapport, usually just to get people to pay attention to your ideas, much less agree to them or carry them out. Also, you have to be willing to listen to, respect, and respond to the concerns of other people who you are involved with. Trust and respect should go both ways.

*Questions:*

1. Have you ever had a great idea, but been so eager to tell others about it that you "bowled them over" in your excitement? How did you repair the loss of rapport, and try again, in a more respectful way?
2. Has anyone ever done something that adversely affected their relationship with you? How did you make the decision to patch things up, even if it wasn't really your responsibility, because the relationship was more important than petty one-upmanship?
3. When presenting ideas or plans to someone, how much time do you give them to voice all of their concerns and objections? Do you then treat that person with the respect they deserve, and take the time to answer them?
4. If you automatically remembered to consider the relationship aspects of all your interactions with other people, in how many ways would your life, and the lives of others, improve?

***There is no such thing as a dangerous or unethical process or technique, only dangerous and unethical users (people). It is up to us to know the difference and act accordingly.***

Influencing others is neither good nor bad. You must decide that what you're doing has a purpose that is worthwhile. "Influence" can't decide that, you have to. If your intentions include a good and worthwhile outcome for everyone involved, it would be silly, and could even be harmful, not to use your abilities to influence.

*Questions:*

1. When has there been a time that you have used some advantage, or influence, over someone, that was TRULY in that person's best interest?
2. Have you ever been afraid of, or concerned by, some new, very powerful, information or technology? Have you vowed to use it only for the best of reasons, and in the best way you know how?
3. Have you ever stopped to think of all the marvelous, but potentially destructive, tools we have around us, even in our daily lives? Do you operate all of them with an attitude of respect and appreciation?

4. If you were to insure that you could use all of your knowledge to make your life, and those around you, the most enjoyable and worthwhile it could be, what changes might you need to make?

***If it is possible in the world, it is possible for anyone. It is only a question of how.***

If you believe you are very limited in your abilities you will act as if those limitations are real. They're not. Act as if you can do anything others can do, and it will motivate you to find out HOW they do what they do. Then you can to. Ultimately,

that is what NLP, or being successful in your endeavors, is all about.

*Questions:*

1. When was the last time you really impressed yourself?
2. How would you go about learning something, now, that you have always wanted to, but avoided or made excuses about?
3. Is there someone in your life who needs to be reminded that we are all capable of just about anything worth achieving? Is there anything stopping you from reminding that person NOW?
4. If you actually behaved as if you could achieve anything you wanted to, how would you be different? When?

I hope you've enjoyed looking over this list of basic beliefs about life. I know this exercise was worthwhile for me. It wouldn't hurt to be reminded of some of these things on a regular basis. Little signs on the bathroom mirror, perhaps. I wonder how many additions you could make to the above list? I wouldn't want to suggest that you share them with anyone, unless you think it might help them. If you've already found yourself changing the way you operate, just in thinking about this list of presuppositions, and answering the questions, great. If not, you're in luck; you soon will.