



Riding the Waves of NLP

Two of the most common questions that arise in the midst of NLP gatherings, usually asked by 'newbies' and 'oldies', who've begun to contemplate their meaning and purpose in the world, are "What" and "Why" ("How" usually comes later in the game). The newbies (those just encountering NLP for the first time) ask these questions, "What is NLP?" and "Why would I want to know about/become skilled in NLP?" to fill in the gaps in their knowledge about what this seemingly mysterious, somewhat esoteric thing called NLP is all about. The oldies have begun re-asking these questions at a 'deep' level of inquiry, after being around the material for years, getting it for themselves and seeing it work with others to one extent or another, they are now ready to ask about who and/or what is behind the curtain. As stated, the questions around "How?," e.g.: "How do you 'do' NLP?" or "How does NLP work?" or "How do I do NLP with others?" usually come later on.

In answer to the question "What?" there could be a multitude of answers, and there will be depending upon whom you ask. One way to address this would be to divide the potential respondees into groups of waves... **First Wave NLPers**—those who came into contact with, studied and learned NLP in the early years of the 70's, **Second Wave NLPers**—those who came to NLP during the 80's, and **Third Wave NLPers**—those who joined the NLP bandwagon around or after the early 90's through today. We could add additional waves or 'movements' to delineate those who have taken excursions to the side and outside of the NLP model, but that would take too long to recap and ultimately

end up leading us no closer to NLP or the answer to our questions.

The likely answer you'd get from a "First Waver" would be along the lines that "NLP is the study of the structure of subjective experience." This is the first rote answer you'll hear from this crowd. They are immersed and entranced it seems with NLP's early technology, which was steeped in trying to sound and be "scientific" so that it, and they along with it, could get and be accepted by the "scientific/psychology" community. Yet, this has also locked some of these folks in the first wave of the NLP technology as well, including some of the limitations that naturally got built into an emerging model as complex and close to human experience as NLP was then and continues to be now.

You'd also likely hear from First Wavers about 'techniques' like "Six-Step Reframing" and "The Fast Phobia Cure," as well as "The Presuppositions of NLP." You'd get a lot of rote answers about these concepts and techniques—when, where, with whom and how to apply them, and you'd hear about how to "solve problems and do 'change work' with people." While these are surely part of the early history of NLP, things have now moved beyond that level of technology and application.

If you were to meet a "Second Waver" you'd be more likely to hear about the developments that Richard Bandler began introducing in the early 1980's after he'd split from his collaboration with John Grinder, especially and specifically about "Submodalities." This presented another level of sophistication to the NLP model. While the first wave was all about language, hypnotic patterns, representational sys-

tems, reframing and anchoring the second wave is all about accessing the atomic components of human experience—submodalities. The five representational systems that comprise human experience—visual/sight, auditory/sound, kinesthetic/feeling, olfactory/smell and gustatory/taste—are referred to as modalities in the jargon of NLP and abbreviated by letter representations, V-A-K-O/G—or the "four-tuple" as it came to be known. The submodalities are what the modalities are comprised of, e.g.: visual/sight—color, shape, focus, clarity..., auditory/sound—tone, pitch, timbre, volume..., kinesthetic/feeling—pressure, temperature, weight, texture... and so on.

Richard posed that the nature of an individual's experience as represented by them was contingent upon the submodality configuration they used and that there was a critical component (or components) to maintaining the configuration intact as it is/was. By discovering the structure of the submodality configuration and shifting the critical component(s) the essential representation of the experience itself would shift, allowing for a different possibility to be contained by the new configuration. He went on to develop sophisticated means and methods to access and modify the submodality configuration and offer people significant new choices in regard to their thinking and their behaviors. Some of what you'd hear from a Second Waver would be about "swish patterns" and "threshold patterns" and "instantaneous elicitation and simultaneous installation."

What you'd find in common between First and Second Wavers would be their orientation to the problem configuration. The presentation would