

# The Origins and Evolution of NLP

## Part 1

### The Meta-Model

Joseph Riggio



**This is the first in a series of articles by Joseph Riggio, Master NLP™ Coach and Trainer, and the designer of the MythoSelf Process® on the history and origins of NLP. Joseph intends to lead a journey through the evolution of the methodology and applications of NLP from the earliest writings of Bandler and Grinder to the more recent developments forming what we now think of as the NLP model.**

What is now known as Neurolinguistic Programming, or NLP, has its origins in the early 1970's when a student Richard Bandler and a professor of linguistics by the name of John Grinder at

more well known and distinguished exemplars that formed the basis of what would become known as Neurolinguistic Programming.

The initial work that Bandler and Grinder embarked upon began largely coincidentally. Bandler had an opportunity to observe Fritz Perls working and as a master mimic Bandler modeled the behaviors and performance of Dr. Perls when he was working with clients. Part of what Richard Bandler modeled included the language and communication patterns of Dr. Perls, including his non-verbal communication patterns—his tone, rhythms, attitude, etc.

Subsequently Richard had the oppor-

is formed from three sub-patterns of communication, Generalizations, Deletions, and Distortions, they identified that people use when linguistically modeling their experience. These sub-patterns formed the basis of what Bandler and Grinder went on to describe in terms of conditions of well-formedness, constituent structure and logical semantic relations—together these sub-patterns form the basis of the intuitions native speakers of a language use when communicating that make communication meaningful, both to themselves and others.

Bandler and Grinder developed a method of using the language patterns

What distinguished the work of the individuals whom Bandler and Grinder studied was their unprecedented success with cases and clients that other reputable and otherwise successful therapists had had no success with before.

the University of California, Santa Cruz, began a process of discovering how masters and wizards in the domain of therapeutic communications performed what these researchers began referring to as magic. What distinguished the work of the individuals whom Bandler and Grinder studied was their unprecedented success with cases and clients that other reputable and otherwise successful therapists had had no success with before. The few individuals whose work Bandler and Grinder studied included renowned names such as Fritz Perls, M.D. of Gestalt Therapy fame, Virginia Satir the internationally famous Family Therapist and Milton Erickson, M.D. the premier Medical Hypnotist of the twentieth century, to name a few of the

tunity to replicate Fritz's style of working with students at the university and remarkably generated results similar to those attained by Perls himself. He brought this to the attention of Dr. Grinder and they agreed to do some research regarding how this was possible when Richard had no formal training or education either in psychology or as a (psycho)therapist. The result of this research, as well as similar research into the patterns of other folks like Virginia Satir, laid the groundwork for what would later become known as Neurolinguistic Programming.

What Bandler and Grinder found was a pattern of communicating used by these master therapists when working with clients, what they called the Meta-Model of Language<sup>1</sup>. This meta-model

to access the way an individual represents the world to themselves and others using the Meta-Model as they describe it. They further identified specific sub-patterns of language utilization that lead to specific cases of ill-formedness, which comprise the larger patterns of the Meta-Model's Generalizations, Deletions and Distortions. Using this information they developed a training process for therapeutic communication using these sub-patterns leading to greater linguistic wellformedness, which they playfully refer to as "Incantations for Growth and Potential." The representation of the world as contained in the language an individual uses becomes for the individual the world as they know it to be for all intents and purposes, their "Map of the World," a