

Experience Change with NLP



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12 Days of Exercises

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Learn NLP for powerful, positive change

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The Process of Change

What is NLP?

NLP (Neurolinguistic programming) is a toolkit built of practical techniques for thinking, feeling and communicating better. It overlaps many different models that study how people make choices, connect and perform.

First developed more than 50 years ago, NLP is now taught around the world as a practical way to understand how change happens in individuals and groups.

NLP Canada Training combines current scientific understanding of human change with the practices of NLP. Our mission is to develop training you will use every day to improve your experience and your influence on others.

The building blocks

This course is constructed from the three fundamental building blocks to any human experience.

The first is called state in NLP. Your state is your experience at a given moment in time. It includes ideas and emotions, but it is grounded in your physical experience. Your body slows and stabilizes your thinking so that you can recognize it and change it.

The second building block is perspective. Your point of view is as important as what you are seeing. In NLP, we describe perspective as your perceptual position.

You can see the world through your own eyes and experience. This allows you to notice details and to take action.

You can see the world through the perspective of another person.

This allows you to learn more about that person, but also to borrow their strengths and experience to interpret the world.

You can also focus on feedback loops: the way one thing influences another in any situation. This means stepping back to see how the environment or other people are influencing behaviours.

When you can step back and imagine seeing yourself in the feedback loops, you understand your own influence on people and situations.

The final building block is relationship. Our interactions with others determine most of the quality of our experience and often our perspective. When we change the way we connect, we change the way we feel and the way we see the world.

The flow of change

Think for a moment of what goes right when you make a change that works for you.

Begin with a purpose, a sense that things could be better. We feel purpose before we can explain it. It's never enough to want to end pain; we have to know what will replace it. We need to know what we want instead of what we want to replace.

Defining your goals can be a process. It's best to start by noticing what you feel like when you are purposeful. Then you can use that motivation to move you toward a goal even before you can see it clearly.

To move forward, you need to feel both motivated and grounded. Grounding is not just about being mindful or present: it's about making energy safe to use.

As you begin to move toward your goal, you notice changes that would allow you to make better progress. This is where you discover that making change is more like turning the dial on an old radio and less like pushing a button.

Deliberate change is analogue: you change a little at a time until you tune in on the state, perception or relationship you want.

As you change yourself, you change all your relationships. You flow into adapting your state, perceptions and connections so that your relationships to other people can support your goals.

Changes in your relationships change the quality of your experience. As you get used to those changes, you'll need to get grounded before moving on to more change.



What to Expect

- This course uses short videos to walk you through a change practice. Do one video a day and then practice the exercise before moving on
- Take notes that connect ideas in the course to what you believe or are experiencing in your own life; the power will come from the connection
- If you skim through without watching the videos, you'll probably only notice the ideas that agree with what you already think
- If you watch the videos without doing the exercises and reflecting on them in your notes, you will make change, but you won't remember how you did it



Purposeful

Start with purpose

The research shows that human beings are bad at predicting what will make us happy. We make choices knowing that some of our choices in the past have been successful, and some have not.

When you start with a list of goals, you are guessing at what will be useful or satisfying. You can improve the odds by starting with how you feel when you are acting on purpose.

While we struggle to define a purpose in words, we all do things on purpose everyday. Trusting that those are connected to a larger purposes requires understanding how our brains interpret words. Each word activates a web of associations. When we activate the web associated with “on purpose,” we are also activating connections to “purpose.”

The video walks you through an exercise designed to make you think in detail about one experience.

You will explore what you do, what you feel, and what other people notice when you are doing something on purpose.

As you explore the behaviours, feelings, and impact of being on purpose, you’ll begin to build a template you can use to test whether or not a choice or behaviour is connected to your sense of purpose.

This template-building requires that you do the exercise and then notice the results you get. You’ll develop the ability to apply the template to quickly test new choices. But you will only build it by doing the exercise using different examples. If you practice until you can do the exercise without the video, you will have internalized the template.

You’ll have a tool you can rely on to test whether your next goal is a good fit for the template of purpose stored within your brain.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the first video
- As you watch, follow the suggestions to recreate a memory of doing something on purpose
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on the experience. How do you feel now? What has changed?
- Play the video again and write your own point form instructions for walking through this process with another experience
- Repeat until you can do the exercise without watching the video

Push back the walls

We often think of a goal as a focal point on the horizon. To reach it, we need to see beyond the present moment. We need to see a bigger picture.

Often, we talk about purpose as part of our big picture thinking. It's a feeling that somehow all the pieces will fit together even though what we are seeing at the moment may seem broken or scattered.

When we see pieces instead of a bigger whole, we often feel stuck in the same way you might look at a puzzle and have no idea where to start. It's easier to start by looking at the picture on the top of the box. In your life, there is no image of the future, but you can approximate it if you have identified the sense of purpose you practiced in the previous exercise.

In this exercise, we will start with the idea that when we are stuck, the way forward can only be seen if we look beyond the walls of the situation to a bigger reality.

The imagination required for this exercise is what we often call big-picture thinking or vision; it depends on our ability to remember and recreate internally what we have observed during our lived experiences.

Without a sense of purpose, when we get stuck our minds bounce a lot. We consider a problem or situation, and then allow ourselves to be distracted. We are trying to get to a bigger picture, but because we are not systematic, we are unlikely to find the way forward.

Follow the guidance in the video to systematically push back the walls of a problem. As you pull back your focus to include other people, places and times, you will methodically include information that is relevant to your situation but which has been outside your conscious awareness.

If you practice, you'll be able to consistently use this technique to push back the walls of difficult situations.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, follow the suggestions to systematically increase your perspective on a difficult problem or situation
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on the experience. How do you feel now? What has changed?
- Play the video again and write your own point form instructions for walking through this process with another experience
- Repeat until you can do the exercise without watching the video

Purpose acts like a friend

Think of purpose as if it were a life-long friend. You wouldn't be able to sum up the nature and impact of that friendship in a word or a phrase. The memories that come to mind when you think of a life-long friend will cover different activities, emotions, and stages of life.

Your purpose is like that. It is something you only think of once in a while, often when you are considering make change happen. Purpose can be a touchstone: something you use to test whether a given choice or direction will be right for you.

What difference does it make to be able to test something before you invest in it?

The exercise in the next video asks you to think about a friend who has been connected to different parts of your life.

This person may not be your "best" friend but they are someone who has known you through different ages and stages.

If you can't think of a friend like this, think of a partner or a family member. You can even think of someone from work who has been an influence or a contact over different parts of your career.

These friends become external touchstones for your identity. They let you know how you have changed over time. They do not have to recognize your purpose to act in the same way as your purpose does.

Your purpose is also a long-term relationship that you maintain even while you change many other aspects of your identity. It becomes a touchstone for the choices you make that lead to satisfaction.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, follow the suggestions to recreate a memory of doing something on purpose
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on a friendship or relationship in your life that has lasted through many changes
- Instead of repeating this exercise, I suggest you explore and develop your friendships in real life. Phone a friend you haven't connected with for a long time, or set up a time to connect with someone who is part of your life now.
- After you connect with a friend, take five minutes to reflect on how you feel and notice what thoughts come to mind about situations that concern you (even if you did not talk about them). What's different now?



Grounded

Get grounded

When you ground an electrical circuit, you create a pathway for excess energy to move back into the earth. This keeps you safe from shocks and fires.

When you ground your experience by paying attention to your physiological experience, you take the energy that comes with anxiety or excitement and make it safer and more productive.

As you discover your sense of purpose and begin to make changes or set goals, you will generate energy. You will create a difference in you that changes your relationships with other people or situations. Those changes will make things less familiar.

Your brain reacts to unfamiliarity as if it were dangerous. This is because the unfamiliar is harder to predict and the function of your brain is to predict the demands on your energy. In unfamiliar situations, it is hard to know whether you have enough in reserve to manage what comes next.

Abstract thinking can amplify uncertainty because thoughts are not restricted to reality and they can change very quickly. Thinking by paying attention to sensory information is slower and steadier. It grounds the energy associated with your thinking.

In this exercise, you'll practice noticing what you are seeing and hearing and feeling. You are not required to imagine; you are encouraged to observe. As you allow yourself to notice sights and sounds and physical sensations, you will centre your thoughts on yourself.

When your thoughts are centred on your body, you require less energy to hold yourself together. You begin to settle into a calm that is also alert.

You'll be ready to adapt to whatever comes next.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you listen, move your attention through sights and sounds and feelings until you reach the end
- After the video, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on the experience. How did your state change from beginning to end?
- Now think about a situation where you are uncertain about what comes next. Run through the grounding exercise. What changes in your perception of the situation?
- Practice the grounding exercise daily until you can run through it without the video.

Ground your perspective

We often use perspective to indicate a way of thinking. This takes physical perspective and makes it abstract and intangible.

One of the strengths of NLP is that it allows us to reverse that: to take something that has become abstract and explore how it shows up in our physiology and senses.

In practice, this means that if you want to change your point of view, you can move your body to a new position. Or you can just change the position of your head. Both are slow and stable ways of making change.

You could also change your perspective by changing your ideas or beliefs. But those changes can be harder to make and they are always much harder to stabilize. Thoughts move through connections so quickly that they can easily circle back to making you feel stuck.

This video will walk you through some of the different reasons for setting the position of your body to change your mind. You'll learn that a neutral stance with open arms is likely to open you up to seeing past your immediate focus. And it's likely to make you feel safer as you adapt to whatever your new perspective reveals.

Over time and practice, you will make a habit of shifting your body to open your perspective and steady your thinking. You'll adopt the posture consciously that you hold unconsciously when you feel secure and confident as you look around at your circumstances.

You might even adopt the slightly slower response time that comes with larger movements and bigger spaces. You'll replace the jitters of uncertainty with the calm that comes from taking your place in a bigger world.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, follow the suggestions to adjust your posture and the weight on your feet (even while you remain seated)
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on the experience. How do you feel now? What has changed?
- Think about a situation that feels uncertain or unhealthy. Then go for a walk. Focus on your posture, your balance, and taking long, easy strides.
- Reflect again. What's different when you think about that situation now?

Steady is your friend

We all love the friend who loves us, the friend who is willing to take on whatever we are feeling and wrap us in a big hug (real or virtual).

But when we are uncertain, our best friends might be the people who keep their distance. Sometimes what we need is not a hug, but a chance to connect to someone else's steady certainty.

The problem is that the people who care for us often do instant rapport with us. This means, they attune their state to our state so that they can understand us. But there can be so much overlap in our states that they get rattled because we are rattled.

What we need when we are uncertain is to pay attention to what is predictable. A friend or colleague who never seems to get too high or too low offers us balance and predictability.

Some people look at this as holding space. They know that their empathy is less useful than their ability to let our problems be our problems. That way we can attune to their state and begin to find more balance and a way forward.

The video walks you through the mechanics of rapport and connection, and it offers you a chance to connect through video with a presenter who is concerned for you without adapting to your insecurity or anxiety.

When you watch it a second time, put yourself in the shoes of the person who is being called upon to be steady, to offer balance and predictability to someone you care about who is feeling all the bumps on their road.

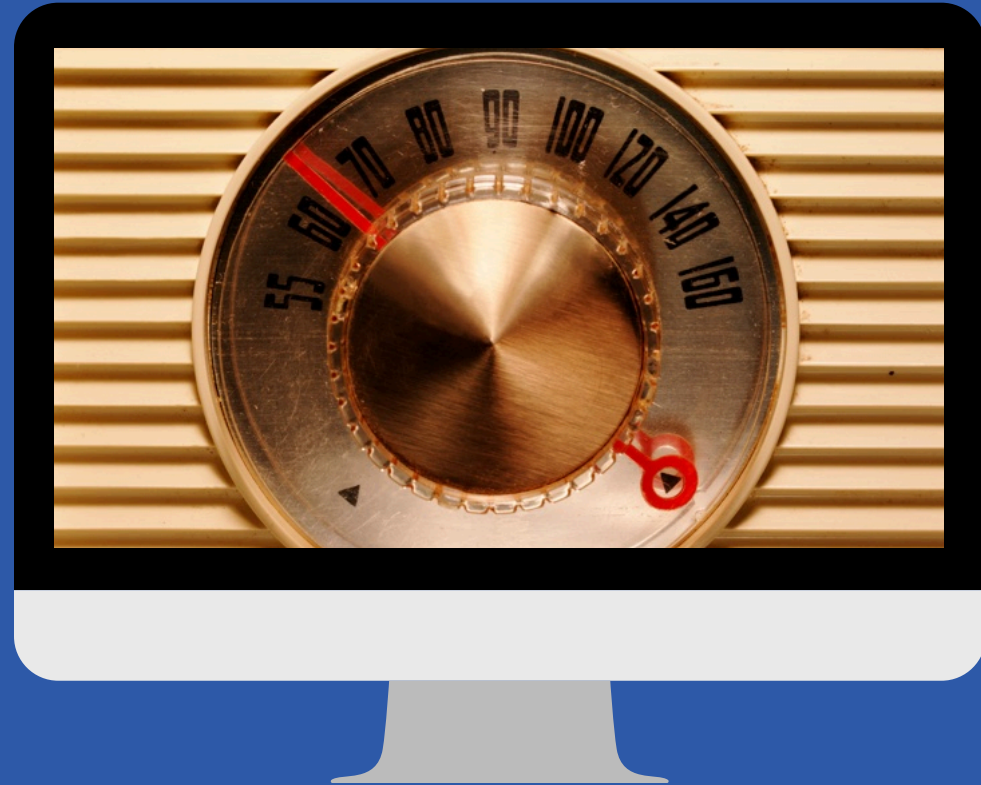
What experiences do you have of holding space: of being present and welcoming someone to share your state instead of meeting them halfway?

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, think about people you know who are steady and calm. They might be people you know well or people you know at work or in the community.
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on how you feel about people who don't mirror your states, the people who are present but not empathetic
- Test your reflections by having short conversations with people who are steady. Be curious about how you benefit from taking on some of their balance and perspective



Analogue

Fine tune your state

In NLP, the word “state” covers how you are thinking and feeling (emotionally and physically) at a given moment. Different states filter perception in different ways. When we notice different information, we behave differently. The driver for the choices you make is your state.

We all wish that we could make uncomfortable states disappear with the flash of insight or maybe a nice pill. But states only shift instantly when we are surprised. And we can't surprise ourselves.

Instead, we have to change in smaller increments. We can still make a dramatic shift, but it will take several steps to do it. Think of your state like an old fashioned radio. You don't tune in by pushing a button. You have to turn the dial, moving through adjacent stations, until you find what you want.

You can turn the dial. You can make small changes.

Can you yawn deliberately to relax your jaw? Of course you can. Can you take a slightly deeper breath and relax the muscles in your throat? Can you raise and then drop your shoulders so they are relaxed instead of hunched?

There are two reasons you don't make these small adjustments. The first is that it takes willpower to do them when you are experiencing a strong emotion or in a situation that feels dangerous. The other is that you don't think they will make a real difference.

But these small changes are the basis for the reset of mind and body that will allow you to handle your situation better. Energy spent tightening muscles is usually wasted energy, a physical preparation for a mental challenge.

Fine tune your state with small changes so you can match your state to the challenge you face.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, follow the suggestions to make small changes in your body even if it doesn't feel necessary
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on your physical state. Scan from the top of your head down through your chest, arms, core, legs and feet.
- Go for a walk or do some stretching for at least 5 minutes.
- Go back to your notebook. Spend 5 minutes reflecting on your physical state. Scan from the top of your head down through your chest, arms, core, legs and feet.
- Notice what changed. Gentle movement is a great way to release tension and clear your focus.

Zoom to a new focus

When you feel stuck, your attention is focused on the situation you are in. You search restlessly for new information on a smaller and smaller patch of ground.

Some part of you always knows that the situation is not the whole of the world and not even the whole of your experience. If you could see it from farther away, in the context of other things, you would not feel so stuck. You could identify other ways to move forward.

But you can't get there from here. Your focus cannot jump instantaneously from the immediate situation to the bigger picture. It would be as disorienting as a movie that continually flashed between vast landscapes and tight close ups.

Movie makers who want to keep you engaged do not flash from one perspective to another: they zoom. A zoom gradually moves you from one perspective to another.

How does this help when you're stuck? Begin to fill in the time and space between now and a bigger picture. Instead of imagining ten years from now, imagine next week. What will be different next week?

Your problem might not be over in a week. But change will happen because change inevitably happens. You will have done and experienced things unrelated to your problem. They will have stretched your attention.

A week won't be enough to change your feelings significantly, so try pushing out a month. You have history: you know how the weather will change in the next month and what other benchmarks will tell you that you are moving through time.

You can keep pushing back until when you return to the problem, you notice something you had been missing. Or maybe you just notice that it will take time and adding stress is not helping you deal with it.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, take notes on the process to move from a focus on a goal that takes time back to today
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes going through the steps to shift perspective on a specific goal that will take more than 3 months to achieve
- How motivated are you now to do the thing you need to do today to make your bigger goal possible?
- Practice every few days until the goal is achieved; always start with the moment of achievement and work backward in stages

Improve your relationship

The quality of our relationships is the quality of our lives. Studies suggest that our circle of friends and family has a significant impact on both our physical and our emotional well-being.

But in every relationship, there is likely to be something that could be better. Since there are no perfect people, there are also no perfect relationships. And many of the relationships we value can have flaws we would like to heal or fix.

But, I hear you protest, I've tried everything and I am always the one doing the work. Maybe. What's certain is that the only one you can work on is you and the only way a relationship will improve over time is if you make a change and sustain it.

Most of our relationships involve feedback loops that become habits.

There are three steps to changing any habit:

- identify the change you want to make and do it
- recognize the results of the change
- continue to make the change until it becomes a habit

In a relationship, you need to start with one other step: you need to identify what you can change in your own responses or behaviours so that the relationship moves toward your outcome for it.

After you make the change, you will have to work to recognize its impact. Both you and the other person will attempt to revert to your habits. Even if you notice an early success, you will have to stay mindful of repeating the new behaviour until it becomes a new habit.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the 7 minute video.
- As you watch, take notes on the process or stop the video to allow you to think and imagine as you go through it
- After you watch, open a clean page in a notebook. Spend 5 minutes listing small changes in your behaviour that might improve a particular relationship
- Go through the video again to mentally test a different change
- Make notes on what you will notice in the other person that will tell you that you have successfully made the change in your own behaviour
- How will you stay motivated to continue to make this change until it becomes a habit you can trust?



Connected

The right connection

Human life is connected life. Our state depends largely on our connections to people and to situations. Our brains work by making connections and then reinforcing them or pruning them into patterns that efficiently predict our needs. We can paraphrase Descartes as “we connect, therefore we are.”

Sometimes we want to intentionally build relationships or make changes in the ones we have. But at other times, it is useful to recognize the impact of relationships so we can choose how to build or change ourselves.

We have all had the experience of meeting someone we know in a new context (maybe moving from work to home, or meeting them with a partner for the first time). It can be easy for us to notice that they are not entirely the same person in this different context.

It's much harder to notice changes in ourselves as we move through different connections.

It matters because sometimes we like the person we become when we are connected to others and sometimes we would prefer the person we are when we make our own individual connection to the bigger world.

We are not separate ever: we are situated. This means we live in a particular time and place and that has an impact on us even when we are not actively connecting to other people.

Remember that you need to be curious about how you change in different connections.. Your feelings are not always a great guide. They are produced by a brain that wants you to be safe, even if that means not being your best.

As you learn to recognize the different parts of yourself that show up in different connections, you can choose the connections that support useful states.



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

Watch, Practice, Reflect

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, follow the suggestions to create anchors by touching a finger to a thumb
- After the video ends, test the anchors. Touch your finger to your thumb on one hand and notice if you think of the appropriate connection
- An anchor like this is not magic: it's a tool for learning and remembering. You might have to set it multiple times by focusing either on connection to a team or (on the other side) connection to the bigger world
- Once the anchors stick, you can use them to shift your state when you want to either feel connected to people or connected to a bigger vision

Know your own influence

You might have heard someone say “you don’t know your own strength.” This is particularly true when it comes to noticing the many subtle ways you change what someone else thinks, says, or does.

It is very hard to focus on what someone else is doing or saying, to track your own thinking and what you want to say, and to notice that someone else has picked up a phrase or an expression from you. You may be leading more often than you believe you are.

This blindspot matters in two ways. The first is that you need accurate feedback on your own effectiveness to improve your communication. The second is that you might be missing opportunities to make suggestions at the time they are most likely to be taken.

While you may have heard that NLP can magically improve your influence, the magical part is not true. It takes lots of intentional practice to condition yourself to notice your own impact.

It starts with watching other people in a space big enough (a park or a mall) where you can see them walking and talking without hearing what they are saying. With patience and curiosity, you will discover that you can see how a change in one person leads to a change in the other.

If you can hear voices without actually hearing the words (maybe by watching television in a language you don’t understand), you’ll be able to observe how one person leads another through repetition, inflection and expression.

The next challenge is to listen to people whose words you understand but direct your attention to the pattern of the interaction and not the meaning of the words

If you practice, you’ll begin to test your influence in conversation by watching for the non-verbal changes in tone, expression, and pacing that tell you someone is ready to follow your lead.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, make point form notes on the process described for learning to recognize influence in conversation
- Build opportunities for practice into your days, whether you observe people on transit, in public spaces, or outdoors
- Make notes on the observable behaviour that let you know one person was following the other's lead: consider gestures, walk, expression and tempo
- Watch people in meetings to see patterns of behaviour and identify where they start
- Reflect in writing on what you are noticing and what you think it means; it is hard to keep track of behaviours while you are also keeping up with a conversation

Be curious on purpose

The best way to learn, and the best description of learning with NLP, is this: be curious on purpose.

We all have things that naturally prompt our curiosity. Some of them are related to things we want to learn. Many of them are related to our fears. We have evolved to be more sensitive to loss than to gain. Our attention naturally moves away from things we want and to things we fear.

This is why it is hard to be curious about success. We are less motivated by success than by the fear that we will fail. And so it takes more energy, more willpower, to pay attention to how to be successful than it does to notice all the things that might go wrong.

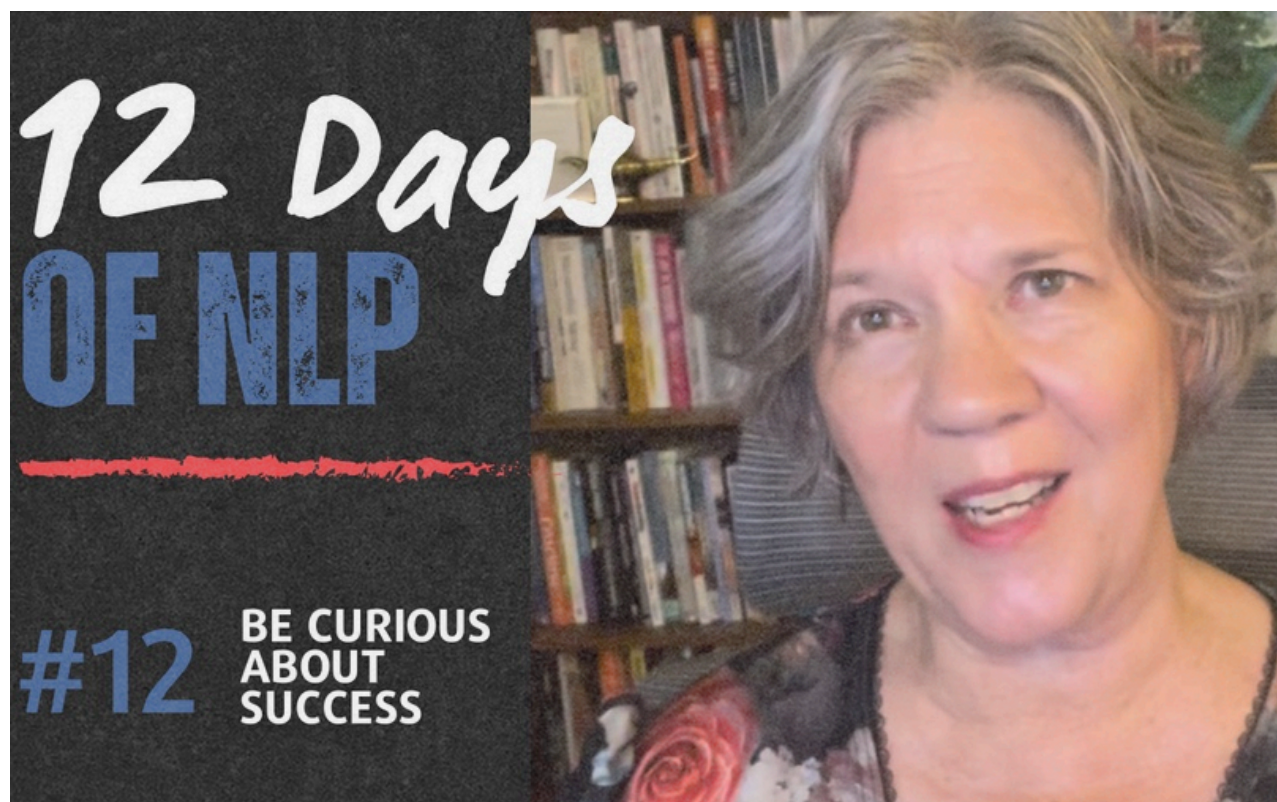
This is even more true when we want to observe how someone else consistently produces successful results at something we would like to do too. We are naturally more curious about failures than successes.

You can change this by becoming systematic in your curiosity. Instead of relying on your natural feelings to motivate you, trust a system for observing and testing behaviours until you can consistently achieve the results you want.

This applies equally well to learning to become more patient as to learning advanced mathematics. If you have access to someone (preferably in person) who can do what you want to do, you can be curious about every aspect of the states, behaviours, and connections they use. Once you have identified these components and how they connect to a situation, you will have a recipe for success.

If you cook, you will understand that it is hard to use a recipe and get precisely the same result every time. In the same way, you will need to observe and practice behaviours past the first success to get consistently good results.

Watch, Practice, Reflect



[Click on the image to watch the video](#)

- Click on the image to watch the video
- As you watch, make notes of people you know who can do things you would like to be able to do
- Pick one person you can observe doing one thing that you would like to do the way they do it
- Write some notes on what you would need to know about state, behaviours, and connections to try to do what this person does
- Now notice: did you get distracted in this few minutes of focused attention? How hard would it be to stick with curiosity and practice until you could consistently replicate the behaviour?
- What would make it worth making the effort?



Next Steps

The way forward

Everyone wants to imagine progress as a path through some clean and lovely woods. But your way forward with NLP may be more like a commute: some parts will move quickly and sometimes you will be stuck in traffic or bad weather.

What makes NLP the best way forward is that it will take you where you want to go if you make the effort to learn and practice. It's a comprehensive system for understanding how human beings make and respond to change.

This short course might feel like it has been a long journey. Each video prompted you to think about different experiences and to adapt different practices to what you want to learn and do.

If you've been doing the work, it has taken some time and you are beginning to notice more and to make change happen. The more you practice, the more you will be able to use what you learn to shape your reactions and your results.



The path ahead might contain bumps or traffic jams. But it will get where you want to go.

Is this enough?

I developed this course because I think it's important to reach people with good information in the way that they are willing to be reached. If you've made it to this page, then you have at least skimmed through the course.

Maybe you have read every word, watched every video, and done every recommended practice. If you have, congratulations, You are both curious and determined.

Most people will have sampled. They might find one or two things that seem most important to them now, and worked with those. This is what people do: we read a book or watch a video, try something small, and then get distracted.

That brings me to the second reason for developing this course. I wanted to help people understand why interacting with a live leader and real classmates is the best way to learn.

There is no science that says learning is possible without effort and repetition. And both of those are easier to do when you are relatively free from distraction and working with other people who also want to make the effort to learn.

Our best recommendation is still that you invest in our 8 days of live on Zoom training to enjoy the best skill development and the best change experience. Our classes attract great people who support each other in staying focused and making change happen.

More NLP Canada Training

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It's written in short, easy sections so you can learn one thing at a time at your own pace.