

second edition

CHANGE YOUR LIFE *with* NLP

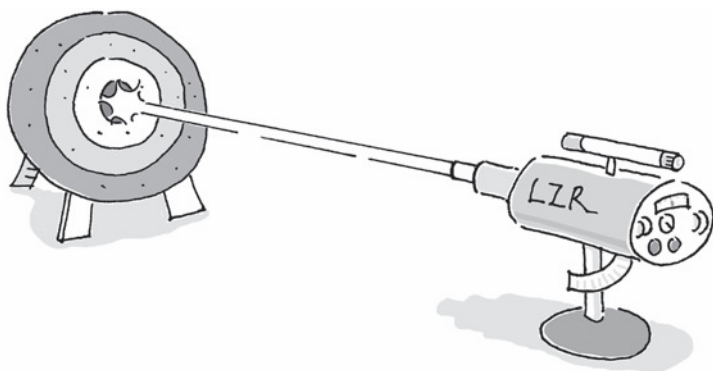
*The powerful way to make
your whole life better*

LINDSEY AGNESS



Change Your Life with NLP

Recently I was in a busy airport terminal when I discovered that my flight was delayed by two hours. I was feeling pretty annoyed and frustrated about the delay so I decided to spend the time spoiling myself by eating and drinking something nice. I went to the smart fish bar and ordered a prawn salad and a glass of chilled white wine. There was a lot of noise going on around me – hundreds of people talking, music playing, announcements being made and luggage carriers bouncing over the ground. I paid very little attention to any of it though as I sat on my bar stool enjoying my meal. True, I heard a general background noise, but I didn't bother to listen to each individual sound. Then suddenly, an announcement for the last call for my flight came over the PA system. The delay had been resolved and in fact the flight was only 30 minutes late after all. I heard the last call for my flight followed by my name and a message saying that my baggage was about to be removed from the flight. Suddenly, my attention was full on and I gulped down the last of my wine and ran to the departure gate as fast as I could. My RAS was the automatic mechanism inside my brain that brought the relevant information to my attention and saved me from missing an important flight.



Your reticular activating system acts as a gateway between your conscious mind and your unconscious mind. It takes instructions from your conscious mind and passes them on to your unconscious. For example, the instruction might be to 'listen out for anyone saying my name'. This is why you should be careful what you wish for. Your unconscious mind will be looking out for it even if your conscious mind is elsewhere.

Triggering your RAS

There are features of your RAS that make it an essential tool for achieving your goals. When you set your goal you create a very specific internal representation of it with pictures, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells in your conscious mind. The RAS will then pass this on to your unconscious – which will then help you to achieve the goal. It does this by bringing to your attention all the relevant information which otherwise might have remained as ‘background noise’. Or, in other words, your RAS ensures that the 126 bits of information that you focus on is information that will support your goal. Focusing on two or three key areas or a single goal does something special to your behaviour. It triggers your RAS. We know our brains are bombarded by thousands of messages each second. Everything you see, hear, smell, feel and touch is a message entering your brain. The RAS filters through *all* these messages and decides which ones get page one treatment – that is, arouse the brain.

Paying attention

One of the things I’ve noticed from modelling entrepreneurs is that they pay attention to the things which are important to them at the time. If their dominant thoughts are about creating a new business, they’ll start seeing other businesses and ideas. They hear conversations about new business ventures. They’ll pick up ideas relating to new business ventures and even see things around them in a different way and relate it back to business.

In other words, your RAS will reject or ignore anything unrelated to your focus and highlight anything that is even remotely related to the important issue – in this instance, the new business venture. When we have goals, our RAS directs us to possibilities that support us in achieving our goals that we didn’t notice before. Have you ever been in a situation where you made a decision about something and suddenly you began to make useful connections to people and things that could support you? At the time you may have thought of that as a coincidence, but what if it was your RAS taking instructions from your conscious mind to seek out what you needed? For example, when you are considering buying a certain model of car, have you noticed how you

begin to see that model everywhere? You might have justifiably wondered if they were there before or not. Or if you have kids, do you remember when you or your partner first got pregnant and you began to see babies and prams everywhere? Where did they all suddenly appear from?

Be careful what you focus on

In contrast, if you focus on what you don't want your RAS will do an excellent job of delivering that to you. Have you ever tried saying to a child 'Don't touch'? The child's brain cannot process a negative and so they focus on the word 'touch' and they go ahead and touch. If you want to lose weight and you focus on 'not being fat', guess what? Your RAS will focus on being fat and doing a really good job for you. If you focus on 'not being in debt', your RAS will focus on debt and attract it to you. If you're looking at a mountain of debt and feeling terrible about it, that's the signal you're putting into the universe. If you focus on what you don't want, your RAS is really obedient. When you think of what you don't want and you focus on it intently, then your RAS will give you exactly what you want, every time. When you focus on something no matter what it happens to be, you are really calling it into existence. Are you following this? So it becomes a **self-fulfilling prophecy**. You have a choice right now. Do you want to believe that things just happen and it's the luck of the draw what happens to you? Or do you want to believe and know that your life experience is in your own hands and that good can come into your life because of the way you think and what you focus on? No one would ever deliberately attract what they don't want into their lives. It simply comes from a lack of awareness. For you, this has changed for ever because you cannot unlearn what you now know.

If you don't believe me, run this experiment with a child. Tell them what they should do **instead of** what they shouldn't do and notice the difference in their behaviour. Parents and teachers are all missing a huge trick if they don't do this! A friend of mine asked me to go along to his presentation skills training to review his programme and to give him feedback. I counted on the first day that he told his students over 80 times what not to do: 'Don't move'...'Don't wave your arms about'...'Don't panic

if you forget what to say.’ The next day after we talked about my feedback the students did so much better, and the difference was that they were told what they should do instead: ‘Stand still’... ‘Keep your arms at your side’... ‘Keep calm if you forget what to do next.’

If you have no goals in life, then your RAS has nothing to go for. If you are drifting from one thing to the next with no focus, then your RAS does not have any clear instructions what to seek out for you. I’m sure we all know people who lead chaotic lives, not settling for anything for very long. Maybe you have experienced life like that up until this moment. Now there are no more excuses. Get your RAS working for you, as it does it very well – use all 126 bits of information entering your nervous system every second of your life to focus on what you want.

I talked in Chapter 3 of letting go of the specifics of how you achieve your goal – because otherwise you will limit the opportunities your RAS can present to you. Let’s also revisit why it’s important to let go of it not being OK for you to not get your goal. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, this may sound contradictory to what I said earlier in the book about your goal being compelling. However, as I noted, if it’s not OK for you not to get your goal you will focus on your anxieties about not getting the goal. If you focus on and place your attention on what you don’t want, you are likely to attract exactly that thing to you. We can understand now how that can happen because your RAS will only present to you the evidence to confirm that you were right all along and that will be the end of that!

Matthew – focusing on dangerous things

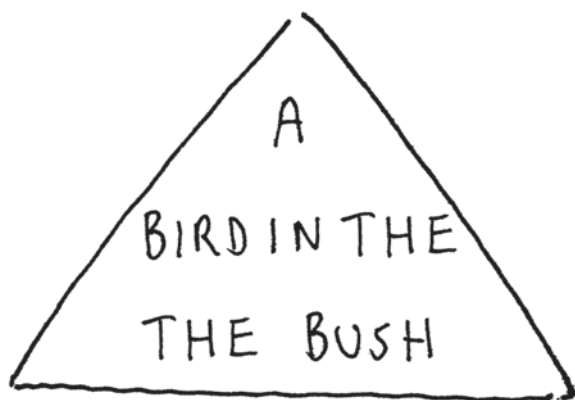
I had a client recently who came to see me after he had lost a successful business. The business had gone bankrupt after initially being very profitable. As he was telling me the story of what had happened I noticed in his language how he started to worry about losing the company after it had taken off so quickly and so well. It was almost as if it was too good to be true for him and he became obsessed with losing it all. It didn’t take long before he stopped noticing the successes of his company and focused only on those things that didn’t go to plan. He lost the business.

Deletions, distortions and generalisations

I spoke earlier of our primary filters, which are to distort, delete and generalise information coming into our nervous system. So what specifically happens when we delete, distort and generalise data?

Deletions

Let's have some fun for a moment. Read to yourself the text you see in the triangle below.



More than likely you said to yourself 'a bird in the bush'. If this is what you said, then you didn't notice that the word 'the' is repeated twice. Look again! Your brain does not expect to see the second 'the' there and so it deletes it.

Second test. Count every 'f' in the text below:

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RE
SULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTI
FIC STUDY COMBINED WITH
THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS...

Anyone who counts all six 'f's first time around is a genius. Three is normal, four is quite rare. In this example, our brains do not process the word 'of' – it gets deleted.

If I were to ask you right now to think about how it feels to sit on your chair, you will immediately become aware of the feeling of your backside on the chair and your back against the back of the chair, although previously you had deleted the information as 'useless'.

Our ability to delete portions of the barrage of input is essential to our survival. The interesting question is, what are you currently deleting that you need to pay attention to in order to achieve your goals? What are the possibilities that you haven't noticed yet that will make the difference between success and never getting there?

Generalisations

We use generalisations to speed up our learning process. One of the great things about NLP is that it resists generalisations and encourages us to take each context on its own merits. However, for most people beliefs drive all their actions, and beliefs are shaped by generalisations. These beliefs then become limitations for future decisions about who you are and what you are capable of. For example, if you have experienced a disappointing relationship, you might now believe that all future relationships will be the same. Your emotional state and physiology will reflect this, as will your behaviour and results – you are not likely to attract the right kind of person or make a relationship work under these conditions. Perhaps you now believe that you're not good enough to achieve your goals because your parents and teachers have told you that in the past. Because of your generalisation, your RAS only notices the times when you didn't get what you wanted. It misses the examples of when you have been very successful. What generalisations do you have about yourself that will impact on your goals until you deal with them? Do you use phrases like 'I never...' or 'I always...'? We will work on these in Chapter 5.