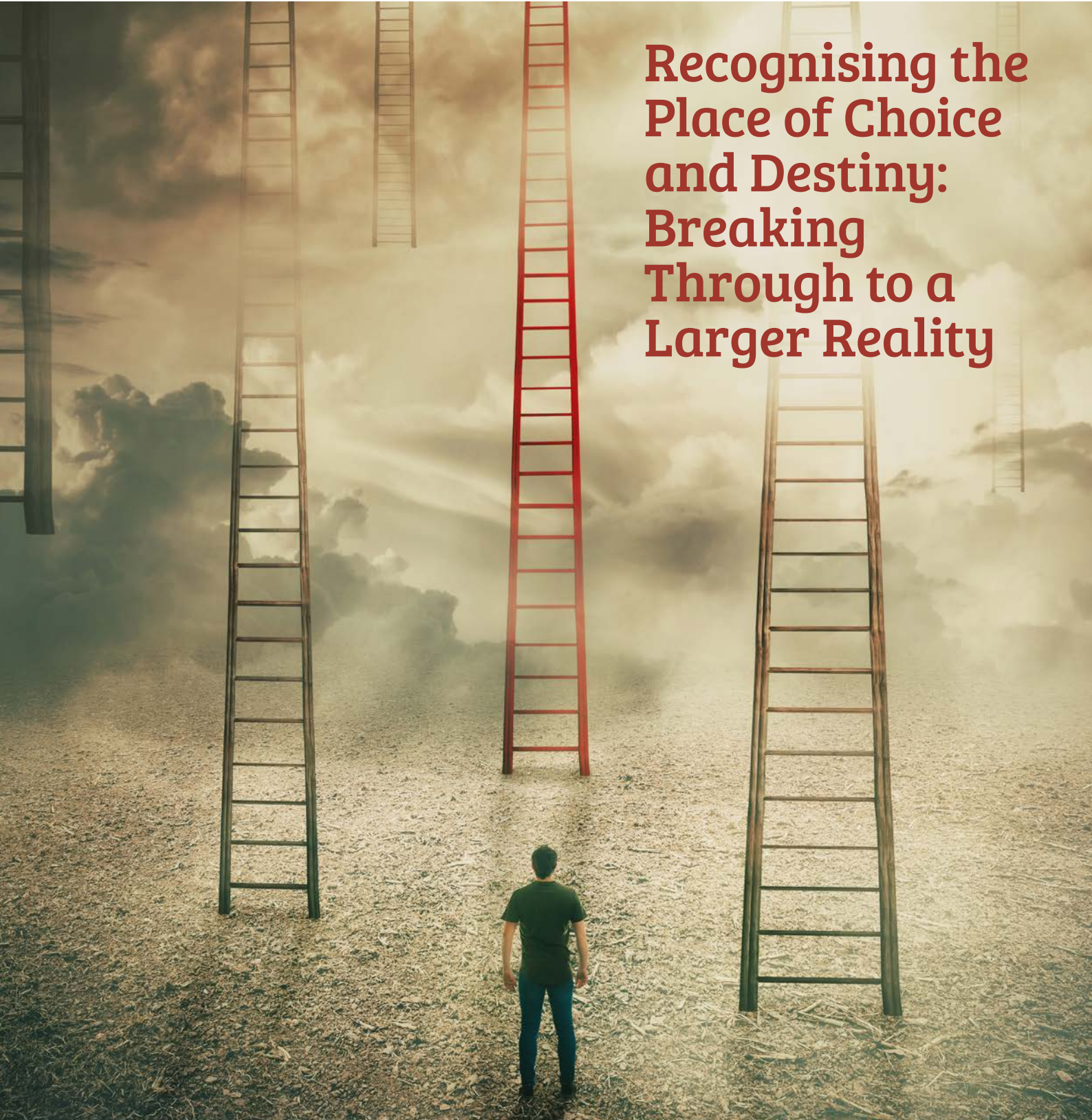


RAPPORT

THE MAGAZINE FOR NLP PROFESSIONALS

A person in a dark shirt and jeans stands with their back to the camera in a field of tall, thin ladders. The ladders are scattered across the field, some reaching towards a cloudy, hazy sky. The central ladder is highlighted in a vibrant red, while the others are a dark, weathered metal. The ground is covered in dry leaves and twigs, suggesting an autumn or winter setting. The overall atmosphere is one of contemplation and aspiration.

**Recognising the
Place of Choice
and Destiny:
Breaking
Through to a
Larger Reality**

NLP Quick Tips • Education • NLP Stories • Health & Wellbeing • Lifestyle • Business • ANLP News • NLP People • Social Media
NLP Conference & Awards • Coaching • Author Interview • Diary Events • Research • Book Reviews • NLP Practice Groups • Blog

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Issue 73 Published January 2022

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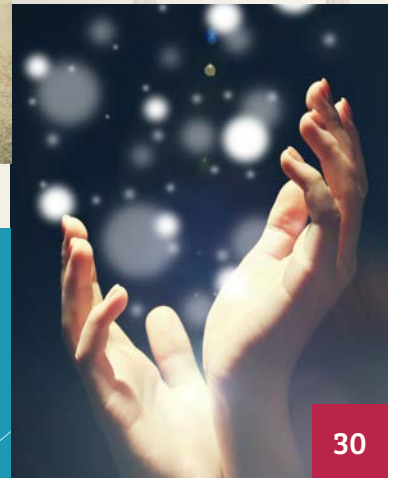
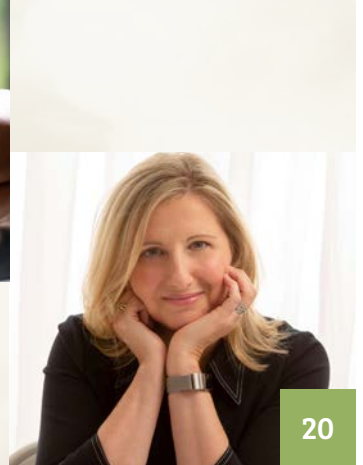
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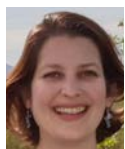
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Welcoming Feedback When It Feels Like Failure



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

Feedback is brilliant in terms of allowing us to adapt our approaches and get closer to what we want.

I've been thinking a lot about failure recently because, apart from one element of my work (the freelance journalism) involving more rejection than many other types of work, I recently failed my first attempt at my driving theory test.

I'd not heard anything at all from a couple of publishers and I received a rejection ('too out there') from another – and my immediate reaction to both the theory test and the rejection was really helpful.

I'd be lying if I said I love rejection and failure, but actual feedback is brilliant in terms of allowing us to adapt our approaches and get closer to what we want.

I completed my NLP Master Practitioner training back in 2008 and in the years since then, I've better integrated the immediate intellectual understanding that *of course* there's 'no such thing as failure, only feedback'. As a result, I'm far more resilient than I was and almost excited about making the tweaks in order to do better next time around.

With the theory test, understanding that I need to learn, by rote, the questions that are likely to change when it's updated (stats about accidents etc.) rather than being able to simply intuit them is fine.

One size fits all multichoice questions make little sense, but now I know they

don't care that, for example, stopping to drink a cup of coffee isn't an option for me. Next time, even though I had to quit coffee before I even quit alcohol and cigarettes back in 2001, I know that when they ask about staying fresh for long journeys, the coffee answer is the answer they're looking for.

When I pass, I'll be able to apply for my Irish provisional licence and start actual driving lessons for the first time since taking a handful of lessons in my 20s (in the UK, where at the time you took the theory after you'd learned to drive).

Failing the first attempt on the theory actually makes me feel safer getting behind the wheel of a dual-controlled car with a qualified instructor. I'll already know so much more than I knew in my 20s (or than I know now – I still don't know enough to pass!).

And with the book proposal, it's unlike anything I've written before but while I understand why they say it's too 'out there', that simple comment helped me realise it needs to be a completely different kind of book.

For the new genre, it's barely out there at all! I may never have made this leap without getting their honest feedback. And because it's a genre I have so little familiarity with, I've immersed myself in research as well as rewriting. Even with all of that, I knew it wouldn't be enough – so I have had to be super brave and

ask for feedback from some people I know, who have been kind enough to read draft sample chapters. It's been really helpful and even if they'd said, 'Urgh. Terrible. Never pick up a pen again!' it would have been information.

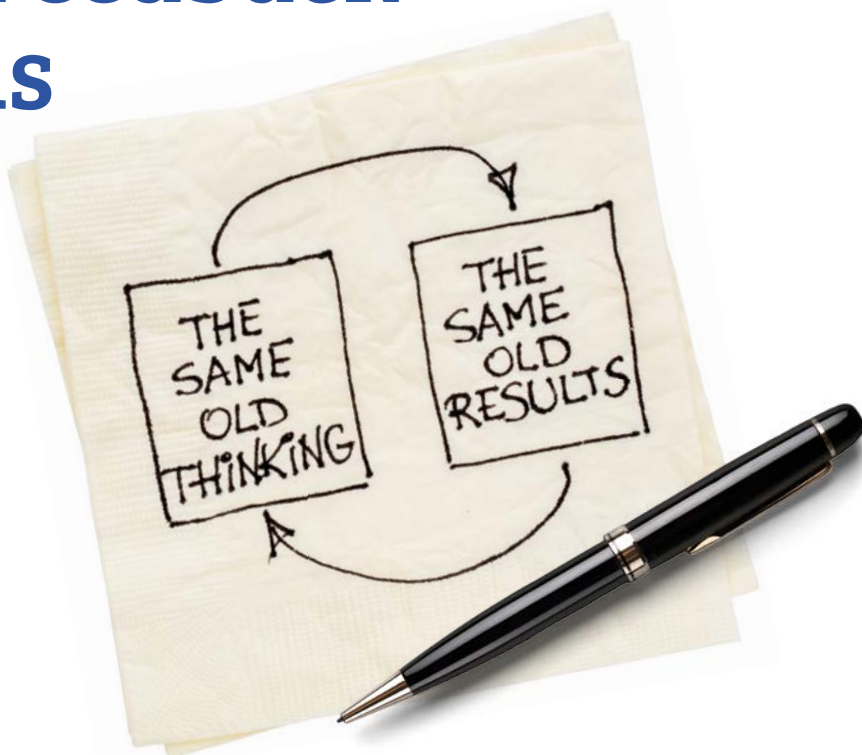
I've been a journalist since 2004 and wrote three (thankfully) unpublished novels in my 20s. Being freelance, I've not had the 'trial by fire' training so many would have had in newsrooms and the like. I had no contacts and no CLUE starting out but was already a coach, so I coached myself alongside my writer clients.

Looking back, Late 20s Me might have balked and quit if an editor had barked that her ideas or pieces were terrible, but it would have been feedback. As a freelancer, phoning (back in the day) and emailing (still) pitches, no response means no information.

An editor taking the time to reject the idea with a teeny bit of additional feedback was like gold. Something I could work with. And many later commissioned and published my better (for them) ideas.

When you think of things you're working towards in your own life, how can you best support yourself through whichever failures you're facing while also seeking the gold within?

What's the information within that 'failure'? The data, the potential tiny tweak that could make that Well Formed Outcome of yours a faster, better reality? ■



Eve Menezes Cunningham is the author of *365 Ways to Feel Better: Self-care Ideas for Embodied Wellbeing* and runs the Feel Better Every Day online membership programme, integrating therapies, coaching and NLP. www.selfcarecoaching.net

NLP in Further Education



By Zoé Carroll

I waited on the start line, my race number tied to my handlebars, my heart pounding with the nerves as I looked to my right and left, to the riders who I believed outclassed me by a country mile. I looked at the crowd in the arena and found my coach. He drew a circle in the air with his finger and I remembered his training. I took a tiny step forward into my circle of excellence. I felt immediately taller, faster, more capable. The horn sounded and I pushed my pedals hard, making a great start out of the arena.

That was my first experience of the power of NLP, over twenty years ago. Learning that I could change how I felt by using really simple techniques is a lesson I never forgot.

When I was approached by the head of the Maths and English departments at the college where I was working to see if I could help support their learners, I knew what I wanted to share with them. These students were all retaking their GCSEs, having achieved a result lower than a grade 4 in their secondary education. Anecdotally, the teaching staff in this department felt their students felt like failures because of not achieving the required grade, but there was no data to support this. They felt as though they were teaching demoralised students who had a lack of belief in themselves. Despite being subject specialists, they recognised that they needed help to change the fortunes of their department – and the lives of their learners.

I had been successfully using NLP and other coaching methods in my own department at the college for several years and our results were outstanding. When funding became available for them to add additional support in their department, they knew they wanted to learn some of the magic that my own students had been benefitting from since I first got my NLP diploma in 2018. Having now become a Master Practitioner, using many techniques successfully in classrooms and for online learning, I was the obvious choice to support the Maths and English team.

In his 2011 study, Voldis Kudliskis identified that, in a 6th form environment, some students failed not through a lack of ability, but through a lack of belief in their ability to succeed. I wanted to use the knowledge that increasing self-belief and confidence was the key to improving their performance, with the almost 900 students who were studying for a GCSE in Maths and/or English at the college. I created a programme of workshops, which I delivered to each class of students over an 8-week period. Every class received two workshops during this time.

I wanted to be able to provide data to support the study so, based on the findings of Angelidis *et al* (2019) that showed cognitive performance anxiety impaired people's working



Focusing on achieving a target grade is designed to be motivating; it has the opposite effect, creating worry about what happens if they don't.

memory, I adapted an anxiety scale that is widely used in sport, replacing references to 'competition' or 'event', with the words 'exam' or 'assessment'. This scale breaks anxiety into three components: concentration, worry and somatic factors (body feelings). I was interested to see which of these three factors may be the main factor affecting performance. I also included a simple measure of confidence with the question 'Overall, how confident do you feel about your upcoming GCSE Maths or English assessment?' For logistical reasons, the students were surveyed after the first workshop, and again after the second one. Ideally, I would have liked to measure their baseline before I started any delivery at all, but this wasn't practical.

The workshops included information about why they may have experienced stress in high pressure situations in the past, and then moved onto practical techniques to manage state, access information using eye accessing methods, a new behaviour generator process, and some timeline and future pacing techniques. Because so many students reported difficulties in concentration in the first questionnaire, I also included a deliberate break state technique in the second workshop.

I was available on the assessment days to help support students who felt so stressed by their assessments that they were compelled to leave the classroom. Most of these were calmed and returned to the assessment room.

The intervention was deemed a success. The headline result was a 23.5% rise in the overall confidence score of the students.

Where targeted strategies relating to focus and concentration were included, a 30.8% increase was seen between the pre and post coaching results, indicating that students felt better able to concentrate and focus after the coaching input.



While these results were positive, collecting data about the performance anxiety of the students revealed a much greater problem.

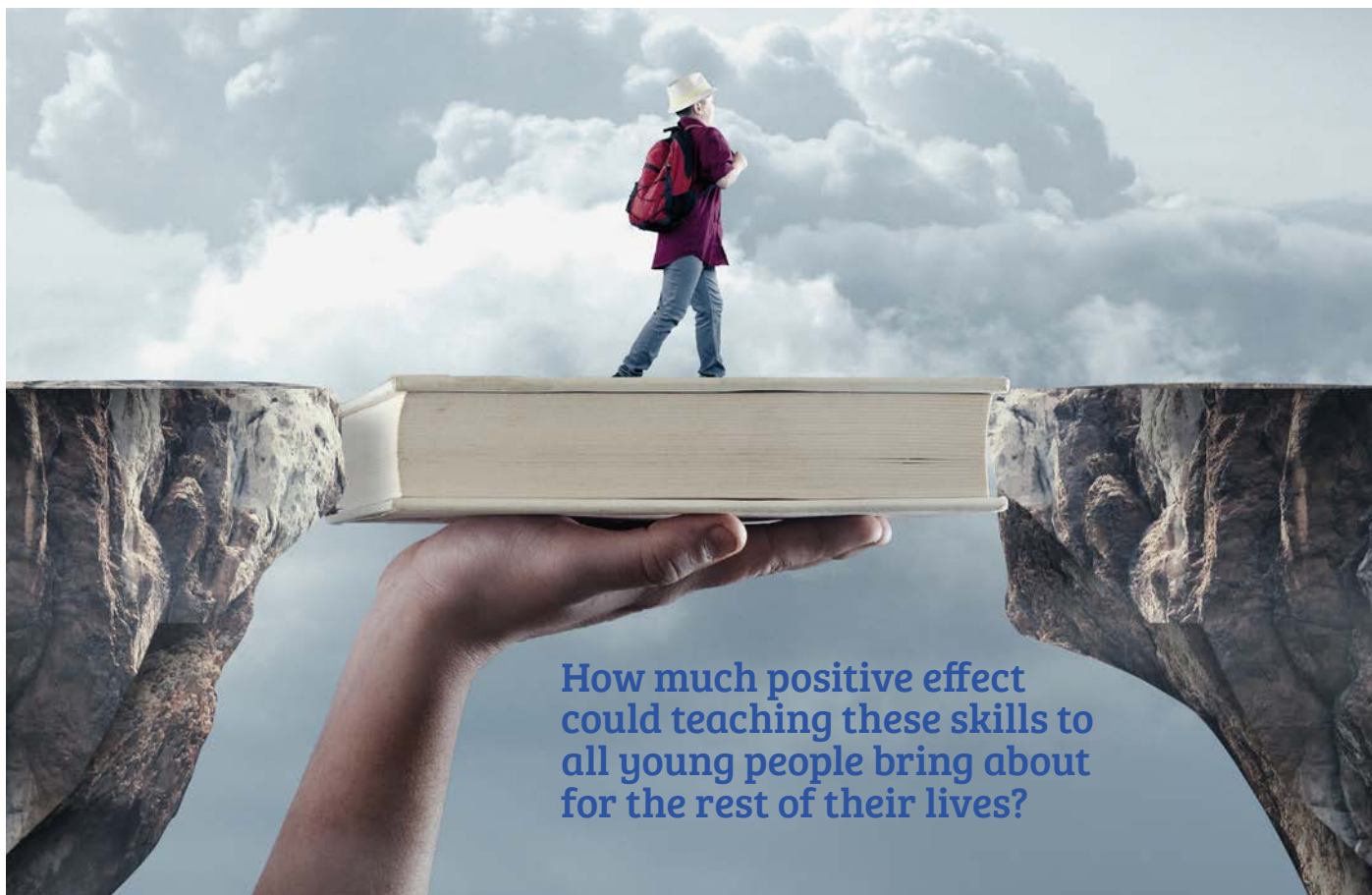
At the beginning of the coaching process, 76% of students fell into either 'very much' or 'pretty much' categories for worry about not doing well in the assessments. This had increased to 92.3% of students in the week before the assessments. It seems that despite feeling more confident, a very large proportion of students were still worried about their performance in the assessments. It seems that despite the focus on achieving a target grade being designed to be motivating, it does, in fact, have the opposite effect, creating worry about what happens if they don't.

This highlights a far wider problem in education more generally; if more than 92% of students are so worried about how well they perform in assessments that it could reduce their performance, how many students are not meeting their potential simply because they haven't been given the tools they need to manage their performance anxiety during exams?

Where targeted interventions using NLP strategies demonstrated a reduction in effect, such as in the focus and concentration part of the coaching process, what would be possible if we could spend time targeting the other aspects of anxiety as well? If we could support young people to know how to bring themselves to being at 'cause' rather than feeling victim to being at 'effect', how much positive effect could teaching these skills to all young people bring about for the rest of their lives?

While the purpose of education is to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours of young people to be effective employees of the future, wouldn't the ability to manage your own state be just as worthwhile as knowledge of Pythagoras's theory?

This project has demonstrated that with only one hour of NLP intervention delivered across two workshops, an almost 25% increase in confidence can be achieved. If this approach was integrated across the entire education system from primary through to university education, how much more of the potential of individuals would be released? And why aren't those in senior positions in education more excited about this opportunity? ■



How much positive effect could teaching these skills to all young people bring about for the rest of their lives?

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Exploring the Neuroscience and Magic Behind Setting Your Intent – and Creating the Best Possible Future for Yourself



By Kris Hallbom

"Life is a mirror and will reflect back to the thinker what he thinks into it"

Ernest Holmes

You are always creating your future. You bring it forth through your thoughts, actions, feelings, beliefs, values, goals and dreams. You do this regardless of the level of your conscious awareness. Your present moment awareness, coupled with the future that you create, is a deeper reflection of your subconscious programming.

Your future goals and dreams are not only a reflection of your subconscious thinking, they are also mediated by your Reticular Activating System (RAS). The RAS is the part of your brain that serves as a filter between your conscious mind and your subconscious mind. The RAS, which is located in the core of your brain stem, takes instructions from your conscious mind and passes them on to your subconscious mind.

Because of this biological function, whatever you are thinking about or focusing upon will seep down into your subconscious mind, only to reappear at a future time. Have you ever decided

When you set your intent, you are directing your Reticular Activating System to stretch towards your desired goal and future, and to also enjoy the journey getting there.



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that you wanted to buy a certain car, and shortly thereafter you see cars everywhere like the one you wanted? That is how the RAS works¹.

Setting your intent plays a key role in encouraging your subconscious mind to bring forth a desired goal, as well as the most optimal future. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word 'intent' is derived from the word *intend*, which means to direct the mind and proceed on course towards a goal. The word originated from the Latin *intendere*, which means *to stretch towards*.

When you set your intent, you are directing your Reticular Activating System to stretch towards your desired goal and future, and to also enjoy the journey getting there.

How to set your intent

To gain an experience with setting your intent and positively programming your RAS, try saying the following three sentences to yourself:



Setting your *intent* is a way of preparing your subconscious mind for the kind of journey you will have in achieving your desired goal; setting your *goal* represents the end result you want to achieve.

- 1 "I hope to enjoy my dinner tonight." (Notice how you actually think about this – your internal pictures, voices and feelings.)
- 2 "I want to enjoy dinner tonight." (Notice how you actually think about this – your internal pictures, voices, and feelings. What is different from the first question?)
- 3 "I intend to enjoy my dinner tonight." (Notice how you actually think about this—your internal pictures, voices, and feeling. What is different from the first two questions?)

Pay attention to how each of these simple changes in your language creates a very different experience. For most people, the first question will produce some doubt. In other words, multiple images will appear in your mind representing different possibilities – one is that you may enjoy dinner, another being that you won't.

The second sentence should produce a different representation. When you say, "I want to enjoy dinner tonight," you will typically see what you want in the future, but you may not see yourself having it now. The future then may feel compelling because you see what you want, but there is still some room for doubt because it is more difficult to put yourself into the *actual* experience of achieving it.

The third image of intending to enjoy your dinner should put you into the act of fully enjoying your experience and being present to it. Intending for something to happen will generally associate you into the experience of achieving your goal and all the feelings, images and sounds that go with it.

When you set your intent, you are marrying your subconscious mind with your conscious will to make something happen. It is like you are sending your Reticular Activating System a message that you are 'expecting' the event to happen, and there is absolutely no room for uncertainty.

Why set your intent?

Setting your *intent* is a way of preparing your subconscious mind

and RAS for the kind of journey that you will have in achieving your desired goal, while setting your *goal* represents the end result you want to achieve. For example, Sir Richard Branson set a goal early in his career to create one of the most successful business empires in the world. He also set his intent to have as much fun and adventure as he could along the way. By staying focused on his goal and staying true to his intent, Branson achieved great success in the business world while having a lot of fun along the way.


We originally learned about the idea of setting intent from a Peruvian shaman who we worked with years ago in the deserts of Southern Utah. We were with a group of NLP practitioners who were modelling the healing powers of the shaman. One of the men in the group, Charles, had the beginning symptoms of early Multiple Sclerosis, and asked the shaman if he would do a healing with him.

The shaman said, "Yes," laid Charles down on the ground and engaged him in a rather unusual healing ceremony. He first got out a rattle, shook the rattle over Charles' head and chanted and sang for a long time. Then he picked up Charles' arm and gently spoke to it. He kept doing these kinds of activities for almost an hour. Finally, the shaman looked at Charles and told him to stand up. He reached out his hand to help. Charles stood up and proclaimed with excitement, "I feel a lot better!"

We were all impressed by this, and asked the shaman, "When did the healing actually take place?"

The shaman looked really confused by our question and replied, "The healing took place when I set my intent. The rest was ceremony."

What the shaman meant is that when he was clear on his intent, it made it easier to achieve his goal of healing the man. Hence, the shaman recognised that if he and Charles entered into the same system, any change he made would be reflected in the bigger system – including Charles' health.



How we think, act and behave has a direct influence on the greater system of our external reality.

▶ Systems thinking

In systems thinking, there is a presupposition that if one part of the system changes then the rest of the system has to change. Anthropologist and systems thinker, Gregory Bateson, metaphorically addresses the power of intent from a systemic perspective in his book, *Steps to Ecology of the Mind*.

“When the phenomenon of the universe is seen as linked together by cause and effect and energy transfer, the resulting picture is of a complexly branching and interconnecting chain of events. In certain regions of this universe (notably organisms in environments, ecosystems, societies, and computers), these chains of relating events form circuits which are closed, in the sense that causal interconnection can be traced around the circuit and back through to whatever position we chose as the starting point of the description. *In such a circuit, events at any position within the circuit may be expected to have an effect on all of the positions at later times.*”²

Setting your intent is a powerful way of directing your conscious energy and attention towards your future goal, which in turn helps your subconscious mind and RAS stay focused on the desired outcome. Your subconscious mind and conscious

mind are parts of a system that co-exists within a larger system that we call reality.

How we think, act and behave has a direct influence on the greater system of our external reality. When we set our intent, we are influencing both our inner reality and our outer reality in a way that sets a chain of events into motion. We are bringing forth a new chain of events that is directly related to our deeper subconscious thinking, as well as our overall intent for the desired outcome and journey that unfolds.

Hence, the shaman was clear on the fact that the actual ‘healing ceremony’ offered Charles’ subconscious mind something to wrap this process around. The healing ritual or ceremony was a way to comfort Charles’ subconscious mind, but the action took place systemically. You can’t change one part of a system without impacting the entire system. So, when you set your intent, not only are you sending a positive message to your RAS to create what you want, you are also influencing the greater system around you.

Not only does intent setting work well with goals and creating your optimal future, it’s also extremely useful to do throughout the day. For example, you

might set your intent to find a parking space quickly and easily when trying to park your car in a crowded area. Or perhaps you have a big meeting with your boss, and you want the meeting to run smoothly and effortlessly. You could then set your intent to be calm and to speak clearly throughout the meeting.

Here is an easy process for setting your intent around certain goals and your future:

- 1** Think of the goal or situation that you would like to set your intent for.
- 2** Set intent for yourself in terms of the experience that you want to have in that situation, or in achieving your goal.
- 3** If there are other people involved, set your intent for the kind of interaction that you would like to have with them. Perhaps you would like to have fun, learn something new, be productive, feel peaceful, be happy or loving, feel respected, be calm and helpful, or feel connected with others.
- 4** Create a mental movie of what you will be like in that optimal, future situation. Notice what you are experiencing in the situation once you have set your intent. What are you hearing? What are you saying to yourself? What are you seeing and what are you feeling?³ ■

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Kristine Hallbom is an internationally recognised NLP trainer, author and professional coach. She is the co-founder of the NLP Coaching Institute and has been actively involved in the field of NLP for over 30 years. She is also the co-author of the books *Powerful Questions and Techniques for Coaches and Therapists*, *Innovations in NLP* and *Alternative Medicine: The Definitive Guide*.

NLP Inspirations: Fiona Stimson



By David Searle

I am so happy to have the chance to talk about Fiona Stimson as part of your NLP Inspirations series.

Fiona is an awesome NLP Master Practitioner, clinical hypnotherapist and coach, making a real difference for people who are often living in extreme circumstances (more of that later).

I met Fiona some years ago when we were training in personal development coaching and NLP. Straight away, I noticed Fiona's passion for people – and for learning about people – and her great curiosity and warmth.

Fiona is not immune to the major challenges that life throws at us and has great empathy with those facing life's big struggles. I know Fiona won't mind me mentioning that she has been through some major health situations of her own in the past. She lost her mother to cancer and, recently, her nine-year-old niece passed away suddenly. Fiona's own experiences have helped her develop strategies to help people process loss – and even find joy in the most difficult of circumstances.

I was impressed with her great capacity for learning. In training, my objective was to learn the basics – enough to get going. But Fiona had this huge appetite to learn multiple disciplines – in great depth – and it shows! I know she was captured immediately by the power of NLP; she has qualified as a Master Practitioner and uses it continually in her work.

I have been struck by what drives Fiona. She definitely has a business head and has established a professional base at The Surrey Therapy Practice in Banstead. She is also evolving her practice to work in conjunction with nature and is building her own coaching and therapy room beneath the trees! She is writing professionally about health empowerment and has recently published her first book, in conjunction with coaching and medical colleagues, to help people understand and respond to their needs more effectively.

But what impresses me most is Fiona's big heart, her interest in the greater good and in making a difference for people.

Fiona has a senior management position at the Royal Marsden Hospital and was inspired to see what difference coaching and NLP could make for people living with cancer.

Making inroads was a big challenge. Medicine, like many other professions, can be a bit precious and uneasy about using 'alternative' approaches in conventional practice. But Fiona persisted and succeeded, practising as a coach with patients with cancer and other chronic illnesses at the Fountain Centre, part of the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford. She is also an Associate with the social enterprise Working with Cancer and runs her own private practice.



Fiona creates a safe space, supporting her clients at their most vulnerable, helping them to overcome fears, build resources and find courage in life-altering circumstances.



▶ Fiona has been part of a three-year PhD study with Portsmouth University and the Fountain Centre to create professional standards for cancer coaching.

Fiona specialises in coaching clients with cancer and chronic illnesses, and those suffering severe anxiety. She also works on health and wellbeing at an executive level within the NHS and academic institutions, combining research with her passion for NLP and coaching.

She creates a safe space, supporting her clients at their most vulnerable, helping them to overcome fears and build resources, be empowered in their situation and find courage in life-altering circumstances. I believe that her dedication and commitment to this makes her very special. It is deep work that I know Fiona finds extremely rewarding. And this part of her work is all voluntary!

I try to imagine what it must be like working with cancer patients – possibly in the darkest hours of their life – trying to help them find some light and positivity in their situation. Helping people reconcile what's going on in their mind and body must be a huge challenge – but Fiona excels, as her clients testify.

Fiona uses NLP at the heart of everything she does and finds it extremely effective in supporting people living with and beyond cancer, as well as other chronic illness including MS, severe back and neck issues, rheumatoid/inflammatory conditions, severe anxiety and depression. NLP has also been of great benefit in helping managers and staff working within healthcare to help manage their own wellbeing.

She also offers 'A Day to Change' – an intense transformational neurological rewiring for more dramatic change in a day – and slower mindset interventions for those requiring a gentler pace of change, depending on their circumstances.

Fiona finds NLP techniques effective in:

- Helping clients to overcome their immediate overwhelm and trauma as they make sense of fast-paced change (diagnosis, clinical interventions, recovery), enabling them to focus on successfully overcoming the barriers they are facing.
- Achieving acceptance and being kind and compassionate with themselves.
- Building self-esteem and confidence.
- Relieving pain and discomfort.
- Changing unwanted thoughts and behaviours and promoting what they would like instead, enabling them to focus on what is important now.
- Building resources for resilience and enabling the client to be empowered, facilitating their own recovery and healing (prehabilitation).
- Managing their relationships and boundaries (personal/professional).
- Working with cancer at all stages, including end-of-life.
- Creating the 'new normal' and being their own inspiration!

Fiona demonstrates her ability to empower her clients to progress in very challenging life circumstances. Her approach is empathetic, intuitive and mindful, changing the belief systems that are no longer serving her clients into ones that they want to hold and aspire to. Through developing the tools and techniques in sessions with Fiona, they can create the life they want to live, developing a new deep sense of self and purpose. The work is emotionally intense, with magnificent outcomes, helping people to realise their full potential, personally and professionally.

Experiencing cancer and chronic illness in her own family, and overcoming her own health issues, Fiona's focus is on pursuing further research into the effects of NLP and coaching in this arena.

I love Fiona's 'Walk with Me' series, which helps those who are suffering from illness or post-illness healing by joining her for nature walks in her local community. This includes NLP, coaching, mindfulness and meditation techniques to facilitate recovery and healing, integrating all the modalities she has learned to 'layer' maximum therapeutic benefit for the individuals concerned.

It's not unusual for coaches and NLP practitioners to consult each other. When Fiona and I have worked together, I have been struck by a number of features of her coaching style.

- Her empathy; she instinctively knew where I needed/wanted to go.
- Her curiosity/questioning; her knack of asking the right, sometimes quite unexpected questions, which opened up previously unexplored areas of thinking.
- Her patience; never rushed and really understanding the value of silence.
- Her discipline and professionalism; always on time and very familiar with the road we were on, gently but firmly checking that I had taken the actions I had committed to, to ensure continuous progress – a reassuring assertiveness.

I know Fiona has had an extremely challenging year personally, due to death and serious illness amongst family and loved ones. She took the decision to pause work for five months to focus on the needs of herself and her family at such a sad time. But always one to seek the positive, Fiona has grown personally throughout this period and will be even better equipped to help others through this learning.

So, to sum up, we have someone here who is a committed practitioner, researcher and academic in her field, who makes a real difference for people. But for me, Fiona's most significant attribute is kindness. She is genuinely kind – and not everyone in our sector has this. All told, Fiona is a true inspiration... and that's why she won the NLP in Healthcare Award at the 2021 NLP Awards. ■

For me, Fiona's most significant attribute is kindness.



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Tim Hallbom is an internationally known trainer and developer in the fields of Coaching, Hypnotherapy, and NLP. He is the co-author of the books *Beliefs: Pathways to Health and Well-being*, *NLP: The New Technology of Achievement and Innovations in NLP*, as well as the author of a number of articles about management, ethics, and change.

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