

# RAPPORT

THE MAGAZINE FOR NLP PROFESSIONALS

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# The Importance of Sensory Acuity and Flexibility



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

## Sensory acuity is a wonderful way to stop arguing with reality.

**O**ne of the ways in which NLP changed my life was the simplicity of sensory acuity (aka – in best Dr Phil voice – “How’s that working for you?”).

When we’re honest with ourselves and use our awareness to assess each action, thought and so on, we can course correct, taking a more flexible approach when something isn’t working.

We’ve all – across the world – had a crash course in amping up our sensory acuity and flexibility since March 2020.

Can you *imagine* back then if we’d known how long things would drag on for? As we learned to live in a very different way, aiming to protect others from our asymptomatic but potentially contagious selves as well as staying healthy and well ourselves, life became temporarily unrecognisable – and then it continued.

In some ways, it feels like an eternity. In others, a blink of an eye. But as best-selling author Glennon Doyle is fond of saying, “We can do hard things.”

Now we’re (hopefully) through the worst of things. With the majority of the people who want to have the vaccination having had it (at least in this part of the world) and things opening up again, we can use the sensory acuity and flexibility we’ve enhanced due to the advanced practice the pandemic forced on us to reflect on other areas of our lives.

### Has what you want changed?

When you think about your well-formed

outcome now, is it something you’ve wanted for a long time or have your wants and needs changed?

Be honest with yourself about what you want and let go of what you feel you ‘should’ want but which no longer lifts your heart, let alone makes it sing.

### Is it working for you?

Is what you’re doing working for you? When you use your sensory acuity to judge the progress you’re making, are you surprised?

For example, maybe you felt forced into working virtually and were itching to get back to face to face sessions, trainings and group events? Maybe the technology surprised you and you’ve chosen to stick with working virtually for now?

Maybe you were absolutely determined to get back to working face to face as safely as possible and turned your practice upside down to accommodate the new, ever-changing requirements.

Maybe your well-formed outcome to simply survive the pandemic was not enough and, as time went on and you felt safe and energised enough, you dusted off that old dream you’d previously not had the time or space for?

Perhaps you decided to prioritise a relationship after finding lockdown with a suddenly less lovable loved one more challenging than you expected? Maybe you were alone throughout and have decided to be more sociable moving forward?

Maybe it’s around people and having missed some LESS than you’d have imagined and others more. How might you prioritise your relationships?

### How might you bring more ease into your approach?

Sensory acuity is a wonderful way to stop arguing with reality. If what we’re doing isn’t working, it’s not about blame or shame, but simply adapting our approach and being more flexible moving forward.

If you were to consider whatever ‘block’ you’re currently facing, what options spring to mind when you ground yourself and connect with a sense of flow?

What’s the easiest way to bring a quick win? What’s the path of least resistance? What’s so effortless, it practically does itself?

I keep reminding myself of the importance of radical acceptance. What seems sensible, obvious and logical to me is a mystery to people who aren’t me and who have their own way of doing things and living life. If I get hung up on how they’re managing a challenging time in all our lives, life gets harder than it needs to. If I accept them as they are – and accept myself as I am – everything gets easier. Even disagreeing without being disagreeable is simpler.

How might you bring more flexibility to the idea of amping up your self-compassion as well as the compassion you have for others? ■

Eve Menezes Cunningham is the author of *365 Ways to Feel Better: Self-care Ideas for Embodied Wellbeing* (White Owl, 2017). An NLP Master Practitioner, self-care coach, therapist and supervisor, she runs Feel Better Every Day (aka [selfcarecoaching.net](http://selfcarecoaching.net))

# NLP from the Heart



By Kash Falconer

**So often, I hear inspirational stories and I really wish the storyteller would understand the impact their words have on me and on so many others, and what a huge difference they might make if those words could be shared more widely.**



**O**n my NLP journey, I have come across some truly inspirational people, from those involved in the early beginnings of NLP to those who are, like me, fledglings on their first exploratory flights. All, in equal measure, tell stories of how NLP made a difference in their lives, giving them confidence, self-belief, well-formed outcomes, strategies to help with work, illness, life...

They generally appear to have one thing in common. It seems to me that the person telling the story may have a limiting belief – that their story is unremarkable and not worth telling.

I have spent five years listening to the NLP community share their stories about how various phobias vanished, how well-being was enhanced or increased, and how projects they worked on transformed the accepted ‘norms’ in society into the exceptional and the extraordinary.

Every time, through laughter, tears or, in many cases for me, a short, stunned silence, I pleaded with the narrator of that story to write it down and send it to us because, whilst it is just ‘another day in the office’ from their perspective, to someone else who may be struggling, that story could be the difference that makes a difference... and a route to finding an NLP solution for their challenges.

So often, I hear these inspirational stories and I really wish the storyteller would understand the impact their words have on me and on so many others, and what a huge difference they might make if those words could be shared more widely.

My pleas, for whatever reason, are often ignored!

**The person telling the story may have a limiting belief – that their story is unremarkable and not worth telling.**

So, how about this as a reframe for you?

We are collating these stories into a book we intend to publish, called *NLP from the Heart*. We have good reasons to do this:

- It provides strong narrative evidence of the positive benefits NLP can have in different circumstances.
- It provides the NLP community with reference points for their work and inspiring examples to share with their potential clients.
- It gives a series of connection points for the general public to understand how NLP might help them with their many and varied challenges.
- It might be the difference that makes the difference...

ANLP’s mission is to be the global flagbearer of professional NLP. We can only do this if you play your part by contributing to this collection of real-life stories! Please check the writing guidelines at <https://anlp.org/nlp-from-the-heart-guidelines> and then submit your contribution by emailing it to [accreditation@anlp.org](mailto:accreditation@anlp.org) before 31st December 2021. If we are over-subscribed, preference will be given to ANLP members. ■



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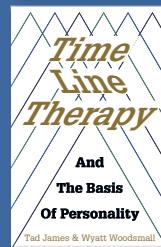
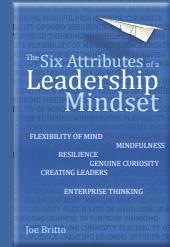
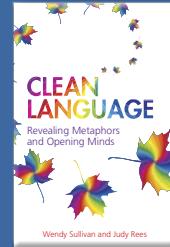
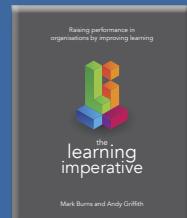
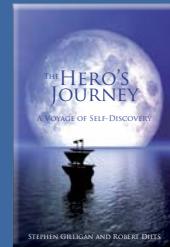
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# Who Will Heal the Healers?



By David Maddams

**H**eard the one about the doctor's receptionist who suggested that, as the doctor was running late, the patient should also book an appointment for the following day, then see the doctor in whichever appointment came around first? We might chuckle at this, seeing that there is some truth in the joke and the frustrating waits we have become accustomed to when trying to see our GP. Even doctors like me can struggle at times to get that elusive slot with our doctor at a time that suits. It's all part of the 'normal' process. But things are far from normal these days. Nobody is seeing the joke anymore. Humour is in short supply. Already overstretched general practices are now seeing what has been called a 'tsunami' of demand.

Suddenly, as lockdown lifts, there has been an explosion in patient numbers wanting to see their family doctor. In March 2021, general practices in England delivered more than one million extra appointments per week, putting huge pressure on primary care staff across the country. Tempers are frayed, stoked in part by elements of the press suggesting practices were closed during the pandemic when doctors were following instructions to 'see' as many patients online as possible to stop the spread of the virus. Now the advice from NHS England is to move back to more face-to-face consultation and, equally, continue to offer

e-consulting around the clock. Even this message was delivered in such a way, and with such poorly chosen language, that GPs were made to feel that they hadn't been pulling their weight despite also delivering over 70% of the vaccine programme. Now everyone is upset and the number of GPs presenting to mental health practitioner services has risen sharply by almost 25%. "Physician, heal thyself" has never been more appropriate. Added to that, many experienced doctors have seen no other option than to leave the profession, adding further to the pressure on those remaining.

Clearly, driving our primary care doctors and nurses to the brink is in nobody's interest. What is to be done, and done quickly? Could NLP have some of the answers?

## The value conflict between general practitioners and government

As a former GP I have a clearer idea of the values that motivated me and many of my colleagues to do the job we do: values around making that difference to people's lives, getting to know them as real people, being there in times of need and having the time and resources to be a safe effective doctor. This becomes harder with the number of doctors decreasing and patient expectations and needs rising. This leads to huge levels of anxiety in many GPs.

**Clearly, driving our primary care doctors and nurses to the brink is in nobody's interest.**





Those doctors happier with a more digital approach to patient care during the pandemic probably valued being able to provide a slick, quick response to patient needs, all done and dusted in one go with the feeling of satisfaction of a job successfully completed. Move on. Tick.

Even so, being glued to a computer all day and trying to adjust to looking for clues to diagnosis in a computer representation of the patient are not without a mental health cost.

It's harder perhaps to understand the values that drive NHS managers and government just now – and what do patients actually value most?

The government narratives for many years have been, in the main, around having 'affordable' NHS costs and budgets with a constant drive to get more and more value for money. This shut down any other narratives around patient and NHS staff needs. During the pandemic, money has been spent in eye-watering quantities. So, what would their values and priorities be at this present time? It would be great to know. Has there been a shift in government thinking?

### **Could NLP help solve the GP crisis?**

Imagine this ... it's a recurrent dream of mine...

NLP practitioners are invited by the NHS to use their skills and tools to develop meaningful dialogue around what needs to happen to set general practice back on a strategic road to recovery. As an example, perhaps an offer of a walk-through of NLP techniques such as Neurological Levels of Change for the GP team, which would be a path of enlightenment for those involved. This would also produce a huge resource of ideas and understanding of what needs to happen for a way out of this crisis so the profession can move ahead feeling valued and with a sense of purpose.

And NLP practitioners have many other tools, techniques and language skills to help get the profession talking, exploring, thinking and onto a sounder footing. There are numerous approaches within NLP that could help with solving this crisis.

The GP representatives at NHS England have been on the back foot of late, trying, unsuccessfully, to please GPs and government simultaneously, so would naturally want to be part of any positive change for good. Things may be very difficult at this time but there is also a great opportunity for real positive change with the right facilitation.

I have another dream (or maybe it's a challenge to the NLP community) in which there are many very experienced and

**NLP practitioners have many other tools, techniques and language skills to help get the profession talking, exploring, thinking and onto a sounder footing.**

able colleagues. What would happen if NLP practitioners were to come forward to become catalysts for positive change in the NHS, using NLP tools and strategies to get to the heart of what needs to happen to make GPs and their staff feel valued again and flourish in the roles they once loved? Acting as communication facilitators too, bringing together government, managers, patient representatives and GPs and their teams... This could be a hugely positive step forward.

We need to turn the page from anger, hurt and negativity to one of hope. Someone needs to do it and do it quickly.

General practice in this country is seen as one of the best in the world. We cannot afford to lose it through negligence or less than helpful positioning of self-interested groups whilst it faces what is probably its biggest crisis in all its existence. It's time to get together and start by healing the healers. Could NLP be part of this essential lifesaving prescription?

**FOOTNOTE:** Throughout 2021, Dr David Maddams has been part of a team exploring how NLP could support primary care and patients through an 'NLP and Health Project'. The project, supported by ANLP, was suggested and is led by master practitioner and coach Yvonne Fernando, who has successfully delivered NLP to patients at Charing Practice in Kent for a number of years as well as raising awareness of NLP and supporting a gardening therapy group. The varied team members also include Fiona Stimson, Dalila Lapi, Tasha Tor-Straten and Jane Iskander, who share the same passion and interest. Together we are exploring various ways in which the aims of the project could be met during a time the NHS is going through huge stresses and change. The time seems right therefore to build on Yvonne's experience and widen the support offered to a much larger number of GP practices and their patients, utilising NLP tools and coaching skills to bring about positive change. We will be communicating more about this project and our plan of action in forthcoming *Rapport* issues. If, however, in the meantime you wish to find out more, please contact Kash at [strategy@anlp.org](mailto:strategy@anlp.org)

**David Maddams** retired as a GP and GP educator in 2019 after 36 years in the health service and published a book about his experiences. Following his retirement, he decided to increase his knowledge of NLP and became an NLP practitioner in 2020. He is a fellow of the Royal College of GPs.



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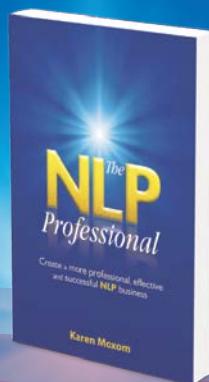
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# Are you an Introvert, Extravert or Ambivert?



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

**D**uring my NLP training in my 20s and then 30s, I realised that I was more introverted than extraverted (based on needing that time alone to recharge). When I'd been drinking (from my early teens until 2001), I'd have presented as more extraverted but fresh sobriety in my 20s brought out the extreme shyness and introversion that had led to me spending the first week of school in America (6th Grade) in detention for reading under the desk. Yes, I was a bookworm – but I was also mortified at being conspicuously 'new' and couldn't even meet the teacher's eye.

Shyness and introversion are often confused but you can have very confident introverts who simply find it more energising to be more reserved, quiet and often alone. Extraverts are more typically seen as the life and soul of the party (we'll have parties again): loud, exuberant and energised by being around others. And yet, while modern western

societies value extraverts, a higher number of CEOs are more introverted. Susan Cain's beautiful book, *Quiet*, praises introverts and reflection. Amy Cuddy's work around postural feedback ('power posing') was initially designed to help her quieter, more reserved students feel more comfortable presenting.

It has always felt about 52/48% for me though, so while the flexibility has its advantages it means I spent much of my 20s, 30s and early 40s feeling as if I were at war with myself, loving (some) people and also thinking that people who lived with just ONE other person were way more sociable and extraverted than I could manage. That being said, I love facilitating workshops and speaking at conferences.

When I came across the idea of ambiverts – people who are more on the middle of the introvert / extravert scale – it made complete sense to me and I stopped fighting it. It's another example of allowing the both/and rather than

either/or choosing between sometimes extreme options.

And, of course, the enormous changes that lockdowns brought mean households of more than one trapped together for months and months and households of only one realising how much we actually appreciate and need people (and hugs!).

It made me wonder how other self-described introverts, extraverts and ambiverts had fared and what we might all do as we move back into a more open way of life.

**"I welcomed the slower pace of life and being at home in my little bubble." ~ Faye Cox, introvert**

"My experience in the first lockdown was pretty good," says Faye Cox. She runs



Faye Cox Coaching identifies as an introvert. "I welcomed the slower pace of life and being at home in my little bubble. Shopping was difficult for me. As a natural introvert, long queues and crowds brought out my anxiety. Being aware of that helped me deal with it. As time went by though and we went back into a second lockdown I found it a little harder being away from friends and family. I was still enjoying a slower pace though and I adjusted my routine to incorporate my anxiety around shopping etc."

"Becoming aware of your natural personality style can really help you make sense of the things that trigger you and help you understand why you do the things you do. I've found it to be massively helpful in my own life and in the lives of my clients."

## **"I am also naturally quiet and shy, which everyone always laughs at given what I do and my line of work." ~ Marilyn Devonish, ambivert and introvert**

"In terms of MBTI, I would say I'm an 'off the chart introvert'," says Marilyn Devonish. "I am also naturally quiet and shy, which everyone always laughs at given what I do and my line of work. That said, since I overcame the fears and anxieties, I may now fall into what looks like ambivert territory, with a side of extroversion and an introvert starter."

"I've been offering online coaching and online therapy since 2005, so what has transpired didn't require a big psychological shift. I've noticed that introversion, up until the pandemic, was often seen as the poor relation. Somewhat undesirable and problematic. The pandemic brought a shift as many introverts experienced less pressure during the isolation."

"Once you have established what your style is, embrace and enjoy it. It is possible to develop and enhance facets of your personality so if there's a trait that traditionally belongs in the opposite camp which you would like to possess, don't rule out learning or doing more of it."

"For example, I wasn't confident speaking to large groups and used

to prefer one-to-one conversation. Presenting to large groups around the world is now one of my favourite things to do. If you want to expand your range, don't let stereotypes or accepted paradigms hold you back."

"For me, the introvert extrovert question goes beyond your 'personality' and is also about how you approach recreation and self-care. Although I have the characteristics of an ambivert - I'm fine working in teams and independently, have the ability to process internally and externally, can act in the moment without prior planning etc. - I know I'm an introvert at heart based upon the latter two factors (recreation and self-care)."

"My new role as an elected member / councillor required knocking on doors campaigning as lockdown eased, which, for a traditional introvert, would be the stuff that nightmares are made of." But Marilyn did it and won a seat on her local council.

## **"Even us extraverts may need to pace ourselves and adjust." ~ Lisa Davis, extravert**

"I was brought up in a family of extraverts, so I suppose I was conditioned to be extravert, in order to be heard," says Lisa Davis, an author, trainer at Get the Edge UK and coach and therapist at Get a Life.

With a more introverted husband, Lisa consciously refined her lockdown experience as much as possible. "I'm a hugger by nature, so lack of that connection was a real challenge for me. I upped my Zoom networking, ran Facebook groups and did video calls with family every day in order to keep connected. I've been back out delivering face to face leadership retreats in the ancient woodlands. It's been wonderful. Of course I'm mindful and aware that not everyone is bouncing out of lockdown - some are very cautious or nervous - so it's important to respect that everyone will feel differently and to be aware of their personal emotional needs, giving them time and space to adjust."

"For those who are more extraverted like myself, it's being aware of giving one another space regardless. Being an extravert doesn't guarantee being happy to pick up where you left off. I've noticed how much more energy it takes to be out

and about travelling from the home office. As a natural extravert who gains my energy from being around others, this has been a surprise. Even us extraverts may need to pace ourselves and adjust."

## **"Wait for others to offer a handshake or hug." ~ Tom Phillips, extravert**

"I've been an extravert all my life - 53 years, so far," says Tom Phillips, an NLP trainer, clinical hypnotherapist and member of Dr Richard Bandler's international training team.

"It's been hard being separated from people physically. This includes family and friends and also being separated from students. Online delivery has worked to a point, but there is an energy in a training room that cannot be replaced or replicated online."

"Go easy. There will be a lot of people out there (other extraverts included) who will still be nervous about Covid and getting infected, especially as infection rates appear to be rising. There will also be people who have been 'asked' to return to the workplace and will not want to do so, either for fear of being infected or simply because they have demonstrated that they can effectively work from home for the last 15 months. Respect social distancing as much as possible. Wait for others to offer a handshake or hug."

Use these - and any other kinds of labels that resonate - as something to enhance your life rather than limiting it. Whichever style resonates for you, be gentle with yourself and others as we're afforded the usual range of options. Keep what's worked for you from lockdowns and celebrate the simplest of pleasures, like dinner with friends, knowing how hard it was when it was off the menu. Notice if your needs have changed. Maybe you want to develop qualities that come less naturally as well as embracing what's already easy. Whichever feels closest to your natural style, ask yourself what, moving forward, you can do to support yourself more when you're alone. List everything. Then ask yourself how you can support yourself more as life includes more people. What springs to mind? ■

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