

# RAPPORT

The Magazine for NLP Professionals

Issue 59

[www.rapportmag.com](http://www.rapportmag.com)

## Thabiso Mailula

ANLP Inspiration  
Award Winner



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# RAPPORT

The Magazine for NLP Professionals

Issue 59 - Published July 2018



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# The essential elements of making organisations healthy places to be



By John McLachlan and Karen Meager



If someone is having trouble managing their time, how is that not linked to their mental health?



**W**hen we won the Best for Business Services UK award at the Mental Health Awards in 2017, the feedback we received was that the judging panel was particularly impressed with our creative approach to embedding emotional and mental health support into all the work we do in organisations.

Even though one in four people will experience a mental health issue in their lives, the subject is still a delicate one in organisations and people are not always falling over themselves to attend a workshop or talk on the subject. As one of our HR partners said recently, 'It's like signing up for a bad parenting course – everyone feels they need one but no one wants to own it.' As clinicians John and I run a small private psychotherapy practice but most of our work is done in organisations. After all,

most people who work full time spend more time at work than they do with their family; they are also generally more willing to try new things in the workplace than in their life outside work, so for us, the workplace is the perfect place to work with people on improving their emotional and mental health – whilst learning other great skills and techniques too.

If you work as a coach, trainer or consultant in a business environment, you have a massive opportunity to support the mental and emotional health of everyone you come into contact with – and the people who work with them.

Many companies think that supporting mental health is providing some awareness training for their managers and having a counselling or support service they can refer people to if they are struggling. As NLPers, though, we have a huge

opportunity to change the way people experience the world of work. In a recent meeting with a large IT company we regularly work for, we suggested that our role was to improve the mental and emotional health of every person with whom we come into contact. Their response was a bit perplexed: 'But you run our leadership development and time management programmes?'. Then the penny dropped, that we build it in covertly to every concept we teach, discussion we facilitate and exercise we coach.

If someone is having trouble managing their time, how is that not linked to their mental health? They are fine to admit they feel overwhelmed, stressed out and not coping in a training programme about time management, which gives us permission to work with them on it; and by doing that reduce their stress and overwhelmed feelings overall, helping them to make clearer and better decisions.

Sounds straightforward doesn't it? But anyone who has gone about achieving this knows that it's much easier said than done. When you are busy and tired, it's easy to just focus on getting through the material and not feel up to getting in there with your delegates. So here are some strategies you can easily introduce to your work as a coach, trainer or consultant.

**OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP A GROUP'S OR INDIVIDUAL'S EMOTIONAL OR MENTAL HEALTH**

**Make sure you are as emotionally regulated as you can be; take your own personal development seriously**

It is well known that our brain structures adapt depending on who we spend time with. If you are emotionally regulated, other people feel safe and are more likely to open up to you and other people. They won't understand why but you could be a catalyst without doing anything except showing up as a well-rounded human being.

**Support people you work with to develop their conflict resolution and negotiation skills**

These are key life skills that are essential to an individual's mental health. Anyone who has seen our website knows we don't offer courses on this; instead we integrate it into everything we do. Facilitate these skills in group discussions; highlight when someone has done this effectively; demonstrate them in your own behaviour.

**Role model and demonstrate healthy boundaries**

Setting and maintaining healthy boundaries is another important life skill which impacts people's emotional and mental health. You can support this by setting and maintaining clear boundaries throughout a programme or away day. Many facilitators set group agreements in a group session but they tend to be fairly superficial, written on a flip chart without any discussion and then not enforced; this is not setting boundaries. Group agreements can be very useful but to be helpful to someone's emotional and mental health they must be followed up on, otherwise people are unconsciously picking up that even you can't stick by the rules you set. Thinking about time boundaries is one of the best ways to role model boundaries; be clear about when you are and aren't available; respect other people's time; finish and start when you say you are going to.

**Feedback, feedback, feedback**

The word 'feedback' has an interesting reputation, even in the NLP world. Often people use it to dump their opinions on others. I once had someone come up to me at a conference to give me ▶

**Most people who work full time spend more time at work than they do with their family**



- ‘feedback’ on my flip charts (she was trying to sell me her friend’s training course). My colleagues had to literally dive under the table to stop themselves laughing out loud, but sadly having unasked for, clumsy feedback forced on you is something people in organisations deal with all the time – so they are on high alert for the rubbish versions of it. You have to get very good at making it part of what you do. Using mental health and emotional support as your framework for feedback is helpful for this; what can you offer them that will build their confidence in their capabilities and help them to use the skills you are teaching them in the outside world?

### Spotting potential mental health issues

Sometimes you will experience mental health issues from individuals in a group; many are undiagnosed and the person themselves may not be aware of it. If you spot any of the following behaviour it could be an indication that someone is experiencing issues that are deeper and might need more professional help.

- Inconsistent appearance; for example smart and groomed sometimes and unkempt and scruffy at other times
- Disproportionate emotion; nothing wrong with a few tears but watch out for emotion that is disproportionate to what’s going on, for example unable to keep state for a lot of the time
- Mood changes; are they extreme relative to normal behaviour? For example down on themselves sometimes and sometimes euphoric
- High levels of irritability, agitation or anxiety
- Loss of memory or abnormal patterns of speech
- More than is ‘normal’ of any of these: expressions of



## The fewer touch points people have, the more likely they are to seek help

hopelessness, lack of interest in things, trouble concentrating, lack of energy.

It is important to note that these in themselves are not evidence that someone has a mental health problem; they are merely flags, something to watch out for. So if you suspect someone might need help what can you do?

### Using one-to-ones

We have short one-to-ones at various points with people, particularly on programmes of more than four days. These provide an opportunity for people to express any problems they are having and for us to raise anything to them individually that you would not want to raise in front of the group.

### Know where to point them for support

Equip your training team with a list of qualified therapists you can refer people to and have some form of supervisory support in place for yourself. When working in an organisation, get familiar with the employee support scheme so that you can give them the information they need straightaway without having to refer them to someone else. The fewer touch points people have, the more likely they are to seek help.

Do we all need to be psychotherapists to help people with their emotional and mental health? I don’t believe so; there are many things we can all do to support this. ●



# Friday 17th May 2019 Masterclass

Judith DeLozier and Judith Lowe

## Passion in Action

Step up! This moment cannot be  
what it is without you *(Nick LeForce)*

The international Passion in Action project comes from our desire to use NLP to make a difference in the world from the heart. It's a project that aims to expand awareness of what's needed in the bigger social picture and to promote community, collaboration and action.

It's a project in service of our rapidly changing world and especially to those parts of our societies and of ourselves that may not be seen or heard or blessed.

In our experience of creating these special social change, personal development and leadership training events, we acknowledge and encourage the profound benefits of:

- the inspirational role models and storytelling from within the group
- the transformational belief changes, support and connections made
- the identification of your 'true North'; to ignite vision, purpose, values, emotions and unique contribution to the world.

All of us at the conference are part of the story of NLP's success and achievements. In this masterclass we want you to find your voice, dream your dreams and create your own path to bring more of your passion into action in the world.

**You are needed.**

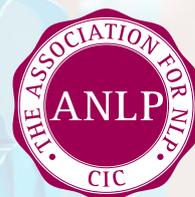
**Judith DeLozier** has been a trainer, co-developer, and designer of training programmes in the field of NLP since 1975. A member of Grinder and Bandler's original group of students, Judith has made fundamental contributions to the development of numerous NLP models and processes. She has been mainly responsible for bringing NLP to the area of transcultural competence, pioneering the application of NLP to the development of cross-cultural skills. Judith's background in ballet and Congolese dance has led her to promote the use of dance and movement as a primary tool of NLP.

**Judith Lowe** is one of the most experienced, committed, effective and engaging teachers in NLP. She has worked for many years with clients from a diverse range of professional backgrounds, in the public and private sectors, both in-house and on public programmes, at every level of NLP, providing innovative, in-depth, skills-based NLP training and coaching. She is known for her warmth, wit and wide reading, as well as her overall dedication to giving her students and clients the very best of advanced, systemic NLP.

Super Early Bird tickets are now on sale until 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Visit [www.nlpconference.com/ticket-sales](http://www.nlpconference.com/ticket-sales) to secure your place.

**NLP**  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE  
17 – 19th May 2019  
The Park Inn by Radisson, Heathrow  
**L O N D O N**  
[www.nlpconference.com](http://www.nlpconference.com)

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Empowering NLP  
Professionals

# NLP International Conference May 2018

If you missed the conference this year, here are a few messages from the 2018 NLP International Conference attendees...

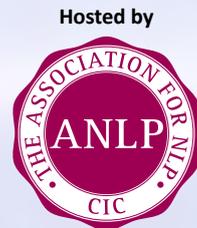


You are really missing out! This is such a beautiful opportunity to learn and meet new people. What you take away from the conference is more than you pay for, when you go there with the purpose of making it worthwhile.

**Nathaly Wheller, South Africa – delegate attending for the first time**

You missed a great deal of new material and some really excellent learning opportunities.

**Adrian Foster, Hertfordshire, UK – delegate attending for the first time**



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The Park Inn by Radisson, Heathrow  
**L O N D O N**  
[www.nlpconference.com](http://www.nlpconference.com)

You missed an amazing opportunity; make sure you find the way to attend next year.

**Marilou Seavey, USA – delegate attending for the first time**



It's worth your while to join the conference where you meet many like-minded people and learn from each other.

**Kit Wan Lim, Malaysia – delegate attending for the first time**



It is an ideal environment for cross-cultural exchange and experience. It is a fantastic way to learn new things and hone already existing skills. It is easy and enjoyable to form new bonds, to network, and to create collaborations and business for the future.

**Marc McDermott, UK – presenter attending for the first time**



For me, the conference generated a lot of ideas about how to continue to expand my skills and my professional qualifications and also do my internal breakthrough. Well organised, solid content in presentation.

**Anonymous, Portugal – delegate attending for the first time**



You should come, it's great. Whether you're an experienced NLP practitioner or just exploring, it's a friendly and enjoyable environment in which to learn.

**Peter Rolland, London, UK – returning delegate**



It's growing and is not the same conference that you might have attended in the past.

**Mark Deacon, Gloucestershire, UK – returning exhibitor**

The topics are wide and varied, so it's never the same from one year to another. There's always something new to discover.

**Returning presenter, anonymous**



You missed a heartfelt sharing of many applications and developments of NLP among an international community and an opportunity for your own personal growth and learning.

**Fiona Sutherland, UK – returning presenter**



You missed a great event! I enjoyed it immensely.

**Robert Dilts, USA/France – presenting for the first time**

The NLP Conference has the potential to become the biggest self-development conference in the UK. Here is where the best minds and best presenters in the world gather, to share the latest secrets in transformational thinking and techniques!

**Terry Elston, East Sussex, UK – returning presenter**



# NLP award winners

The community spirit present at this year's NLP awards ceremony was simply heart-warming. From the sweet harmonies echoing from the London Show Choir to the vibrancy of dance moves later into the evening, the positive vibes emanated from everyone present at this wonderful event. Both uplifting and emotional, the evening was a true celebration of just how much of a difference individuals are making in the world with NLP.



## And the winners are...

For all awards apart from Lifetime Contribution, Macmillan Cancer Support were presented with a shortlist from which they made the final selection of the winner in order to make the selection based on the merits of the nomination.

In aid of

**WE ARE  
MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**



### NLP in Business Award

#### Monkey Puzzle Training

The 2018 Award for NLP in Business was awarded to Monkey Puzzle Training and Consultancy.

The business was founded in 2007 by Karen Meager and John McLachlan. The aim was to blend their extensive business experience in retail and financial services with a deep understanding of people and to help businesses maximise the skills and talents of their people and grow their businesses at the same time. John is a qualified clinical hypnotherapist and Karen is a UKCP-registered psychotherapist. Both are NLP master trainers and are actively involved in the NLP world.

Macmillan Cancer Care commented, 'We picked Monkey Puzzle as we were really impressed with how much positive change they have brought to so many businesses. The fact that they have embedded mental health into all of their training really stood out to us. Their aim to have trained at least 200 specialist researchers and programme leaders to NLP diploma standard by 2018 is really inspiring.'



### NLP in Public Service and Community Award

#### Kim Ingleby

The 2018 Award for NLP in Public Service and Community was awarded to Kim Ingleby.

Kim has worked with over 200 clients using NLP tools, techniques and strategies to help reduce, overcome and manage their physical and mental conditions. Within the community, she works with groups of teenagers and women running workshops to increase their body confidence and self-worth. Many of her clients are linked with public service and complex GP referral cases including chronic eating disorders, stage four cardiac rehab, cancer rehab, stroke palliative care, postnatal depression and anxiety. Her five-star bestselling book, *The Hound of Happiness – 52 Tips to Feel Good*, and other fundraising efforts have raised £80,000 for mental health charities.

Macmillan Cancer Care commented, 'Kim has created some real life-changing tools to help clients overcome some serious trauma. She has made a huge impact in the community and helped many different families to learn how to cope.'



### NLP in Healthcare Award

#### Dr Jeff Stoker

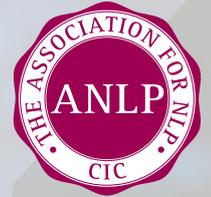
The 2018 Award for NLP in Healthcare was awarded to Dr Jeff Stoker.

Jeff is a partner in the Bermuda and Marlowe GP Practice in Basingstoke and a director and founder of Juvenate, which provides healthcare consultancy, self-help products and personalised life and business coaching.

Since Jeff trained in NLP he has integrated what he has learned into his own clinical practice to create change and results in his patients, as well as training his admin staff and receptionists in NLP techniques to engage and communicate better with patients.

Macmillan Cancer Care commented, 'We chose Jeff by looking at the feedback he received from delegates at his seminar. He was motivational, humorous, and provided useful examples for people to take away and put into practice.'

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**NLP Lifetime Contribution Award**

**Robert Dilts**

For the Lifetime Contribution Award, voting was opened to the online NLP community, the Leadership Summit and attendees at the NLP International Conference. A voting slip was in each goodie bag. Scores from all three sources were counted, then combined, leading to the eventual winner.

The NLP Award for Lifetime Contribution was presented to Robert Dilts. Robert has been part of NLP from the beginning in the 1970s. Robert's continued input and connection to the whole NLP community is unparalleled. No one else in the field has been so eclectically engaging for such a long uninterrupted period of time.

He has been one of the major contributors to the validation and systemisation of NLP, adding numerous models and concepts. He continues to demonstrate evolving applications of NLP through publications and workshops and he has worked hard to promote NLP at the level of worldwide community. Robert was the first person to systematise NLP into some form of a discipline.

He was one of the greatest contributors to the field in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1970s and 1980s, Robert's publications created the first blueprint for the field of NLP. Before that time, books had been written about aspects of a field, but not as a gestalt. His numerous publications over the past 40 years demonstrated and led an evolution in the field of NLP and a development of its applications.



**NLP in Education Award**  
**Joanna Harper**

The 2018 Award for NLP in Education was awarded to Joanna Harper.

Joanna became involved with the charity Friends of Mombasa Children in Kenya when their work was still on a very small scale, sponsoring individual children and sending them items such as football kits, books and other small luxuries their families would be otherwise unable to afford. She worked with a little boy whose struggles really struck a chord with her as he was the same age as her son. In 2017, as a long-term donor, Joanna was offered a teaching position out there which, unlike in previous years, she was able to take up. She conducted some classes teaching English to the children, but most of her time was spent with the teaching staff taking them through NLP Foundation skills.

Macmillan Cancer Care commented, 'Joanna's trip to Mombasa, using her NLP experience to aid both teachers and pupils, is incredible. The testimonials from some of the students were fantastic and Joanna seems incredibly passionate and dedicated to making a difference to their education.'



**ANLP Inspiration Award**  
**Thabiso Mailula**

The ANLP team were so inspired to hear that one of the NLP award finalists was intending to travel all the way from South Africa, having never left Africa before, to attend both the NLP Awards and the NLP International Conference! His dream of attending was made possible after receiving generous donations from his previous clients and students as a token of their appreciation for his support in changing their lives.

Karen Moxom, CEO of ANLP, commented, 'We followed his journey, excitement and 'countdown to London' on social media and wanted to acknowledge just how much he inspired and uplifted us with his actions. We are so grateful for his presence and the energy he brought to these events. He is an inspiration to all.'

# NLP Award for Inspiration - Thabiso Mailula



By Andy Coote

**T**he International NLP Conference which took place in May welcomed a new face this year. Thabiso Mailula from Johannesburg, South Africa was shortlisted for the 'NLP in Healthcare' award on the basis of the nominations he received from clients and colleagues. When the shortlists were released, Thabiso set about raising the funding to make his first journey outside South Africa to take part in the conference, and his enthusiasm and excitement impressed the organising team at ANLP greatly. An idea began to emerge.

At the conference, Thabiso quickly made a big impression. His enthusiasm and energy were winning him friends and potential collaborators amongst the delegates from the first morning, where he joined the audience for the Robert Dilts and Ian McDermott keynote. It was clear, from his conversations and his social media, that he was at the conference to make the most of the experience.

At the end of the second day, the main conference room was converted into an awards venue, with tables set up for a meal and the stage set for the awards presentation. Thabiso appeared in dinner suit and black tie, and radiated his joy as the London Show Choir welcomed diners to the evening.

The awards were presented between courses throughout the dinner. When Healthcare was announced, the winner was Dr Jeff Stoker. Had Thabiso made the long journey to be a runner up? It seemed so but his smile was undimmed and he was generous on Twitter in his praise for Jeff Stoker of Juvenate:

'@coachthabisom – Congratulations to Juvenate for winning the NLP in Healthcare award at the 2018 NLP Awards; great work you do and most importantly love your personality.'

In the next awards presentation, Karen Moxom introduced a Special Award for Inspiration. She told the audience, 'The ANLP team were so inspired when we heard that one of the NLP award finalists was intending to travel all the way from South Africa, having never left Africa before, to attend both the NLP Awards and the NLP International Conference. We followed his journey, excitement and 'countdown to London' on social media and wanted to acknowledge just how much he inspired and uplifted us with his actions.' Presenting a clearly delighted Thabiso with his award, Karen told him, 'Thabiso, we are so grateful for your presence and the energy you have brought to these events. You are truly part of our NLP family.'

Thabiso gave a short acceptance speech, punched the air with his trophy and returned to his seat. He later commented, 'The surprise special award by the International NLP Awards organisers ANLP caught me completely unaware; truly the most memorable moment of my life.'



## When the shortlists were released, Thabiso set about raising the funding to make his first journey outside South Africa to take part in the conference

Thabiso graduated from MEDUNSA (Medical University of South Africa) in 2007 with a BSc in Psychology, adding a further qualification in Trauma Counselling in 2010. After working as a community counsellor providing individual and group counselling in community clinics and hospitals in central and southern Gauteng, Thabiso joined the Talisman Foundation as a psychological facilitator in 2011. His sponsor for the award, Sanda Zwane of the Talisman Foundation, said, 'In the past seven years Thabiso has made a great impact in the mental health sector through his passion for helping people with mental health and addiction problems.'

'In his work at the Talisman Foundation, which is a psychosocial rehabilitation service for people with mental health and addiction problems, Thabiso decided to study NLP as he felt his psychology degree was not enough for him to make the impact he wanted to make. Thabiso's role was to prepare the clients for life outside the rehabilitation centre by educating them, removing their limiting beliefs and educating their families and employers in how to reasonably accommodate people with mental health problems.'

His NLP studies with School of Life in South Africa have led to his certifications in NLP. As his nomination pointed out, 'During his time at Talisman, Thabiso did group sessions and one-on-one sessions, in which he excelled as he was always creative and able to think on the spot whilst taking the sessions. For example, in a one-on-one session if clients bring up something that is traumatic or negative and needs to be explored, he always thinks of exercises or stories that help the clients, leaving them in a more positive state.'

'Thabiso has also found creative ways to do techniques that he normally does with individual clients and within a group set-up; for example the most fascinating for me was seeing him take a group of 30 clients through a technique called the resource triangle to help the clients step into their ideal self.'

'His NLP and life coaching skill is a tool that Thabiso uses daily in his life and with all his clients comfortably and with ease. He knows how to anchor clients and how to help them to be in a positive resourceful space and also how to prevent a client from spiralling when speaking about traumatic or difficult issues.' ►

Thabiso decided to study NLP as he felt his psychology degree was not enough for him to make the impact he wanted to make





- Associated with Thabiso's nomination were a number of client testimonials.

One client said, 'As you will remember, we met when I was fresh out of a near-fatal shooting incident and keeping this state in place with many self-destructive actions, habits and beliefs, so stubbornly clung to as to be almost classifiable as delusions. And to worsen that a stubborn resistance to criticism, which has cut off the possibility of constructive rapport with many a therapist before. You, however, did not criticise – you explained. You shed light on the positive intent of every action of ours, explained how the mind works in deciding on the (sometimes unproductive) method to follow, to satisfy these positive intents – and left all the criticising and exploring why to a now very curious, non-hostile me. You then introduced me to what later became known to me as NLP principles: how to understand how these decided-upon actions are based on programming built up through my experiences in life, how those are not cast in stone and, ultimately, how to influence and improve this "hard wiring" to lead to more self-beneficial subconscious as well as conscious decisions and actions.'

Another client said, 'I always felt comfortable to talk to you because you didn't treat us like patients but like people. When I got the opportunity to be in your group I was excited and scared at the same time because I knew that you would help me but I also knew that you don't tolerate any excuses or mediocrity. You helped me understand my mental illness but not only did I learn that living with a mental illness was okay but I learnt to love the new me. I still feel the labels of major depressive disorder, borderline personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder weighing me down but the skills you taught me and the wise words you shared with me helped me to start telling my story like a survivor, not a victim.'

Thabiso also holds the role of learning and development manager for Beyond Ability Talent Solutions, a South Africa-based recruitment agency, founded by Ntsoaki Phali, which helps disabled people into work. For them he is involved in sourcing and facilitating sensitisation training on disability in the workplace for managers and employees, providing training for transformation managers in existing clients that are part of the transformation forum, and marketing and facilitating learning and development programmes to improve compliance with the EE (Employment Equity) Act and productivity in the workplace.

His own newly formed business, set up in May 2018, is the Subconscious Frequency Academy, which provides Life Coaching

## He is also planning his return to the NLP International Conference in 2019 as a speaker

and NLP 101 (Operational Excellence for Self & Others), Life Coaching certificate, and Public Speaking Workshop courses.

As for the future, Thabiso is a speaker at the third Coaching in Africa symposium to be held in Accra, Ghana from 3rd–5th October with the aim of 'redefining the licence to lead in Africa'.

He is also planning his return to the NLP International Conference in 2019 as a speaker. He wrote recently on Instagram, 'Sitting here looking inside my mind, to figure out what I'm going to present on at next year's International NLP Conference. Yep you guessed it, my goal is to present at next year's International NLP Conference. My journey thus far has taught me it wouldn't be worth it if it was easy.'

After celebrating with Robert Dilts, who followed Thabiso on stage to win the Lifetime Contribution award for 40 years of development and innovation in NLP, opportunities are opening up for Thabiso. NLP continues to develop and it is good to know that it is thriving and in good hands in South Africa. ●



# Book review request

If you want a new NLP book to read, we have 27 that are waiting to be reviewed...and you get the book free of charge!

\*In exchange for a 250-word review of the book, we will send you one of the 27 titles we have that are waiting for your eyes to evaluate the content and absorb the learning. Send your request to [rapport@anlp.org](mailto:rapport@anlp.org) for more details... Here are the titles and authors:

\*Write a review and get a **FREE BOOK**

Title	Author(s)
Reflections on a Secret Pond	Sally Evans
Becoming Happy	Melody Cheal
The NLP Cookbook	Fran Burgess
Under the Bed – What's Really Going On?	Linda Porter
NLP At Work – The Essence of Excellence	Sue Knight
Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics	Ralph D. Stacey
Words That Work	Alicia Eaton
The Music in Music Therapy	Jus De Backer & Julie Sutton
Corporate Escape – The Rise of the New Entrepreneur	Matte Barón
Chronic Pain Resolution	Olivia Roberts
The Only Way To Create A Beautiful Body and a Healthy Life	Donna Still
NLP and Coaching for Healthcare Professionals	Henwood & Lister
Thinking Therapeutically	Tom Barber and Sarah Westland
Butterflies and Sweaty Palms	Judy Apps
Your Way Home	Bruce K Stewart & Lou Danielson Stewart
The Loss Box – How To Accept Loss in Our Lives	Judy Lee
Two That Are One	Heather Lealan
Presenting With Power	Shay McConnon
Step Out Step Up Stand Out	Ulf Brackmann
Experiencing Reality	Chris Cathey
How To Coach With NLP	Robbie Steinhouse
A Loving Company	Claus Böckmann
Soulful Living	Claus Böckmann
Awareness	Anthony De Mello
Be A Happier Parent With NLP	Teach Yourself
The Little Book About Big Stuff About The Brain	Andrew Curran
The Brain's Way Of Healing	Norman Doidge

# The ultimate well-formed outcome

NLP support for death, dying and bereavement



By Madeleine Allen



I began applying NLP modelling to this area around 10 years ago, when I modelled cultures who accept death more comfortably than most western cultures

**W**hat is your relationship with death?

People find this a strange question at first. Death is usually a subject that people avoid talking about. Often the first response is one of fear, or even superstition. It is as if talking about death will bring death closer.

A friend of mine is a school teacher, and she told me, 'Talking about sex won't make you pregnant. And talking about death won't kill you.'

So why talk about death?

Death is the inevitable ending of life. It is definitely going to happen to you one day. And most of us will also be affected by the death of other people around us. It is a subject that deserves to be talked about, and to be talked about resourcefully. If anyone is well placed to be resourceful when discussing this difficult topic, then it is us, the NLP community.

I began applying NLP modelling to this area around 10 years ago, when I modelled cultures who accept death more comfortably than most western cultures. Celebrations such as the Mexican Day of the Dead make communities and individuals more aware of death. That helps them to be more able to deal with all the related experiences of dying and bereavement.

I also modelled Bernard Crettaz, a Swiss sociologist who published his book, *Sortir la Mort du Silence* (Bring Death out of Silence), in 2010. Crettaz set up Café Mortels, which translates to Death Café. His concept was to bring people together in a relaxed and safe setting to discuss death and dying openly. The aim was to increase an awareness of death in order to help people to make the most of their lives. Crettaz insisted that these discussions should take place over food and drink, saying, 'Nothing marks the community of the living as much as sharing food and drink.'

When I work on the topic of death with groups and individuals, I often start with the question, 'What is your relationship with death?' When you think about it now, what do you notice?

- Death may have crossed your path several times already, or death may be a stranger to you.
- Death may feel very far off, or close at hand.
- You may fear death, or be accepting of it.

## What is your relationship with death?

- You may be contemplating the death of a loved one, or reflecting on your own mortality.

What often happens is that thoughts of death start with fear or pain. However, when people are given clean space to process their thoughts, they typically move on through stages which include awareness of the unknown, to questioning and curiosity, to the recognition of a unifying experience, connectedness, joy in being alive and ultimately love.

Throughout my life, I have experienced death in many ways. I buried my goldfish when I was five. I've attended countless funerals. I've lost close friends and relatives. And I held my father's hand at the moment that he died. But I hadn't really talked to anyone else about death. I didn't even know what my best friend's experience of death was. When I went back to work after Dad died, no one mentioned it, or asked me about him.

## What to say when someone has died

I learned three big lessons that really help with knowing what to say to someone who has been bereaved.

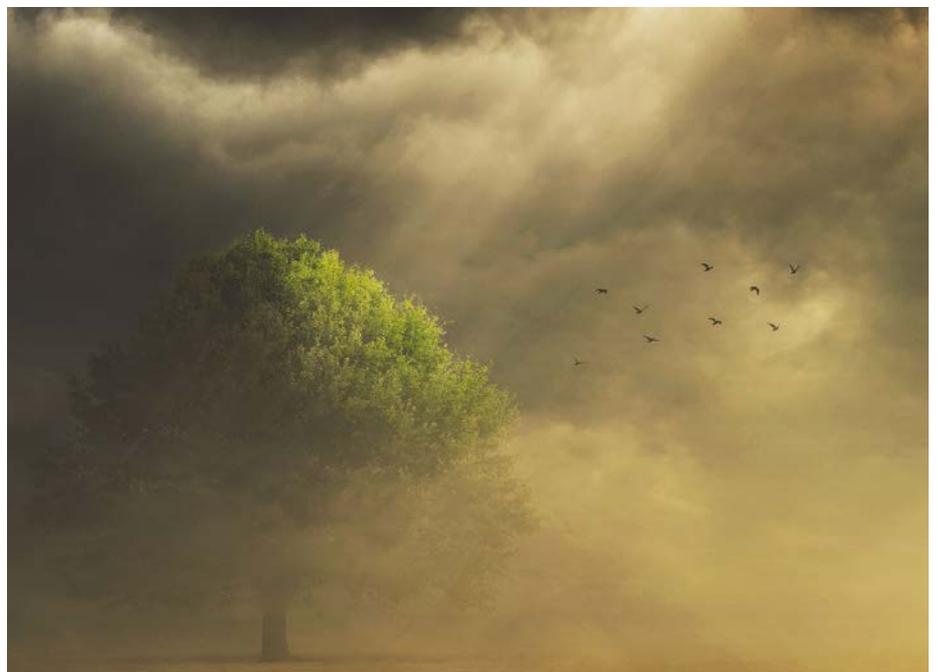
- 1 Don't say 'I know how you feel.' The bereaved person's feelings are unique and personal. Simply respect that.

- 2 When you first hear that someone has died, or is terminally ill, a useful phrase is simply 'I'm so sorry to hear that.' It acknowledges the reality, whilst giving you the time and space to reflect on what, if anything, to say next, after listening to the other person.
- 3 The hardest part for many bereaved people is when some people say nothing, because they don't know what to say. I experienced this, and it felt as if people were avoiding me. And that hurts. It's much better to say 'I don't know what to say.' Or at the very least, send a card, a text, an email to let the person know that you are thinking of them.

In all cases, the most important thing is to use the advice of NLP – stay in rapport with the bereaved person; respect their map of the world; respond in the way that meets THEIR needs, not yours.

## NLP support for death, dying and bereavement

A valuable contribution to this topic is Steve and Connirae Andreas' NLP grief process, described in their book *Heart of the Mind*. They modelled people who grieve 'well' compared to those who experience unusually long or painful grief. What they noticed was that good grieving comes about when the bereaved person is able to let go of any painful memories of the death and its circumstances. Instead they think about positive memories of the person who has died. They are then able to work through ►





## Bereavement is an identity-changing event

- ▶ the grief process and achieve healing and release.

Sometimes, the bereaved person gets stuck with memories that are painful. For example, they may only be able to recall the circumstances of a difficult death, or they may be overcome with regret at the way things were left when the person died. Steve and Connirae Andreas call this 'recalling the ending'. NLP offers many ways to help to reframe this recollection, and then release it in order to replace it with the positive and beneficial memories that allow healthy grieving. For example, some might use swish, or other submodalities work. Others might use re-framing, or collapsing anchors and then anchoring a resourceful memory of the person who has died.

### Bereavement is an identity-changing event

For many people, when they experience the death of someone they love, they experience the creation of a new 'part'. When my father died I realised that I had a new part which I called 'fatherless Madeleine' – newly created, fragile and unsure of my new world. At the same time as this new part was coming into being, my identity of 'my father's daughter' was in danger of being

crushed. It was as though this part of me could no longer exist once my father had died.

Many people experience something similar. One man reported that he walked around for months with the words 'I'm fatherless' in his head.

One of the most therapeutic processes available from NLP in this situation is to facilitate a discussion between these parts. Bereavement is an identity-changing event. By allowing each part to be identified, named and acknowledged, and by giving each part a voice, you can help your identity to evolve resourcefully. One way to do it might be like this:

- Set a context by thinking about someone you love. You can do this whether they have already died, or if you want to prepare for the future.
- First, notice the part of you that expresses your relationship with them when they are living. Give that part a name, and notice its characteristics. In my case, this was 'my father's daughter'.
- Next, notice the part of you that expresses your relationship with them after they have died. Give that part a name, and notice its characteristics. In my case, this was 'fatherless Madeleine'.

- Now, have these two parts talk to each other. In particular, what gift does each part hold for the other?
- Then, invite the two parts to come together, to collaborate, and notice how they are both valuable parts of your whole identity.
- Take time to reflect on this process.

### Further resources for supporting death, dying and bereavement

This is a huge topic, and there are many other NLP and related resources that can be helpful. For example, use Memory Resolution™ or Time Line Therapy® both to clear past feelings of anger, sadness, fear and guilt and to walk into the future to resolve any anxiety about death. I have had success with using phobia cures to help people who have a fear of dying. I am particularly grateful for learning the Hawaiian Huna Ho'oponopono process, and the Buddhist Tong Len meditation.

NLP can be useful to support different stages of illness and dying, and types of bereavement, including the loss of a pet, a job, a home, or the anticipatory grief that people might experience when someone has dementia. The applications of NLP are endless, and constant, because we are all going to die.

Steve Jobs said, 'No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because death is very likely the single best invention of life. It is life's change agent.'

Although I often call death 'the ultimate well-formed outcome', of course death itself does not, strictly speaking, meet the NLP well-formed outcome conditions. For example, for most of us our death is not really within our own control. We don't usually get to choose where, when and with whom it takes place. However, like any outcome, the end state is the result of everything that has gone before it. And so if death is the outcome, then LIFE is what must be well formed. Your life IS in your own control.

There is a Snoopy cartoon which I keep on my office wall. Charlie Brown and Snoopy are sitting together, gazing into the distance. Charlie Brown says, 'Some day we will all die, Snoopy.' Snoopy replies, 'True, but on all the other days, we will live.' ●

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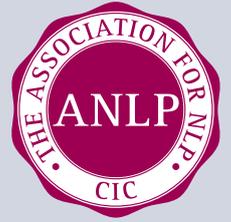
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