

## Neuro Linguistic Programming Basic Assumptions

Perhaps you've spent your life watching your weight, dieting and hoping that you would find the right weight loss program that would enable you to get thin once and for all, permanently and safely. Perhaps like me, throughout your life, you've been told, "If you could just control what you're eating, you would lose weight." So you've focused all your attention on changing the way you ate. You cut down, ate less, went without, restricted, bit your lip and toughed it out in an effort to lose the weight.

Yet despite your most enthusiastic and passionate efforts, something, somehow always gets in the way and you find yourself coming back full circle struggling with your weight over and over again.

**Comment [AA1]:** Karen, is this a useful repetition or do you recommend omitting it?

As I mentioned earlier, your success depends upon what mental games you are playing with yourself and what stories you're telling your body. In my professional opinion, as a Master Practitioner of Neuro Linguistic Programming, I think that NLP is one of the most effective ways of creating change rapidly by helping you to see things differently.

As I've mentioned before, the problem is not what you are eating, it's what's eating you! This is a sentence that stops you dead in your tracks and really makes you think about what it means. It creates a paradigm shift in your brain which is the equivalent of a mini earthquake or a machine that has blown up from overuse.

### *It's Not What You're Eating: It's What's Eating You!*

When you think more deeply about the meaning of the two thoughts combined, it leads you to question the belief that food is the source of your problems. When you switch around the words, it changed the entire meaning. Didn't it? It's kind of like putting a new frame around an old picture. It makes it look different. In NLP, this is called a Reframe.

NLP is a real user friendly technology that's chock full of benefits for you. Imagine being able to upgrade the old programming in your brain, that computer between your ears and change the way you respond to things, like being able to laugh where you once cringed. NLP gives you an attitude of confidence that enables you to create new patterns of thinking and believing in yourself. It helps you to take what is useful from your experience and discard or change the rest, enabling you to slice through limiting beliefs like a hot knife through butter.

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With the help of NLP, you can add spice to your relationships, make more money, get more of everything you want, faster and more efficiently. All of a sudden you're rockin' to a different beat. Basically it can put you back in the driver's seat, make you more successful, get you to have more fun and be more juicy.

NLP makes use of a set of assumptions, also called presuppositions that are like tongue twisters for the brain. These are a collection of very useful and empowering assumptions

that are sturdy building blocks upon which you will build a strong foundation for a powerful self image.

So often we're seduced into thinking that the events that we've experienced in our past control our lives and determine our destiny. That's not true. It's not the events in our lives that shape us, but our beliefs as to what those events mean. We make meaning out of everything that we experience. Since your brain is always searching its billions of files in an attempt to create new meaning from your experience, you have the power to choose what things symbolize to you and that affects how you feel. By changing meaning, you can choose your thoughts. You don't have to be a victim of circumstance anymore.

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So you get to choose if you want to feel attractive, playful, productive or any feeling you want, even when you're having a fat day. How cool would it be to face an intimidating person or situation, feeling completely calm and confident, instead of shaking in your shoes? By learning how to relax your body, calm your mind and direct your thoughts to what you want, NLP gives you the ability to step way out of your comfort zone so that you can become the best version of yourself. The choice is yours. At its most basic core, it means that you get to have choices about how you feel and who doesn't like to have more choices?

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According to the law of attraction, if you want to change the way that you act and behave around food, you have to first make the change in your mind. Henry Ford once said, whether you believe you can or believe you can't, you're right! This is an example of how thought precedes action.

In this section, I'll share a brief glimpse into the history of NLP and break down each of the basic assumptions, and put them into perspective for you. It's useful to have assumptions that give us choice, freedom and fun in the world. As the saying goes, "you often get what you expect to get."

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### What is NLP?

NLP was developed in the early 1970's by Richard Bandler, Ph.D, a computer programmer/information scientist, and John Grinder, Ph.D, a linguist. Bandler and Grinder were fascinated and wanted to understand what made people tick! While most professionals in the therapeutic community were preoccupied asking the question why people do things, Bandler and Grinder decided that it was more valuable to learn how.

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By combining their understanding of computer science, the study of language, behavioral psychology, and general systems theory, they were able to develop a technology known as human modeling. By using the computer as a metaphor for the human brain, they decided to study role models, experts in their field and learn the secrets behind their success.

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Bandler and Grinder started the ball rolling by observing the work of three master psychotherapists, Fritz Perls, Virginia Satir and Milton Erickson. This enabled them to

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study how each of the three different therapists were able to perform or accomplish a task by isolating the specific elements and processes each individual went through internally and externally.

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This style of observation analysis led Bandler and Grinder to develop processes and strategies, similar to recipes that anyone could use to duplicate any desired behavior or skill. For example if you wanted to learn how to eat like a naturally slender woman, you would refer to the strategy, and go through each individual step completing one before beginning another. The first step in the recipe, would be to find a role model who already has accomplished that task and then you would proceed to the next step.

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**Deleted:** This would be a woman. In this case, I've already done this for you and found an excellent role model that can teach you exactly what you need to know to accomplish this. ¶  
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For the purposes of learning a new skill from a role model, you would ask them several questions: what they do, how they do it, how it feels, what they think about, what's important to them, what makes it work, what to look for, and various other questions that would guide you to know exactly how to duplicate the behavior you want to learn.

NLP is known as the study of the structure of subjective experience. That means that not only do you study what is clearly visible to the eye by carefully observing body language, eye movement, skin color, pupil dilation, rate of breathing, voice tone changes and various other physical distinctions, but you also pay close attention to what is going on inside of that person internally.

It's one thing to study and mimic someone's behavior in attempt to learn how to acquire a skill. That gives you a measure of success. However you stack the odds in your favor by going beneath the surface and fishing for what motivates and inspires them to be excellent in their abilities. To get to these deeper bits of goodness, you have to ask a series of questions to learn what a person is thinking, determine if they see images in their mind's eye, how big they are, where they are located, are they in color or black and white, big or small, and various other distinctions that make up the person's thought processes and internal experience.

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Throughout this book, I'll remind you of the many wonderful models and shape shifting reframes that can coax you to see your experience from a more useful and enlightened perspective.

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I would have to say one of the most fun ways of looking at NLP is that it gives you an opportunity to play. My teachers, Rachel Hott, Ph.D and her husband, Steve Leeds once said that NLP, is an acronym that stands for Now let's play! Shall we begin? Let's have some fun and explore those presuppositions – those incredibly cool tongue twisters for the brain!

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## NLP Basic Assumptions

### *The map is not the territory.*

This phrase coined by Alfred Korzybski in his book, “Science and Sanity,” published in 1933, has been considered the historical foundation of NLP. We take in information through our five senses; sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. These are the filters that strain our experiences. Once we gather this information, our brain creates meaning and assigns symbols to these experiences.

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To some, the word, “mother” is a woman who is soft natured and quiet, easy-going and nurturing, always present and kind, filling the person with feelings of love and warmth. To others, the word, “mother” evokes memories filled with pain and hurt. Our experience colors our interpretation of reality. Your interpretation of reality is different from actual reality.

Simply stated, believing that the map is the territory, is like eating a menu instead of the food.

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Although the menu may have a picture of the food accompanying its description, it’s a far cry from the same experience as sitting down to enjoy the meal. Big parts of the experience are missing.

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Our words and language are the equivalent of maps. From this language we derive our thoughts. These thoughts drive our behavior. At one time, it was believed that the world was flat, as explorers ventured out in pursuit of challenging this belief, it was discovered that the world was not flat.

Therefore maps are not able to include all the information of the territory they represent because the territory is always changing. IN order to create a topographically accurate map of Manhattan, one would need to make the map the size of Manhattan and include every street and house, fire hydrant, person, animal and thing that resides in Manhattan..

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As dieters, it’s understandable why we would have old outdated maps indicating that weight loss can only be achieved by restriction and deprivation, counting calories and avoiding certain foods. This is because this belief has been socially accepted for a long time with few rare exceptions.

Now with the advent and understanding that our bodies have an inner wisdom cued toward guiding us toward greater wellness, it is now becoming more widely accepted and understood that diets don’t work.

**Deleted:** *The meaning of your communication is the response you get – no matter what your intentions were. ¶*

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When you make this assumption, you push the envelope in getting specific in clarifying what you want, and clearly conveying your thoughts to the listener. Holding this assumption means that you are taking 100% responsibility for your communication and recognizing that the response you get is only feedback. By paying attention to the results you are getting and using this information to guide your behavior, you will move closer to your outcome. Here’s an example

*Every behavior has a purpose and is motivated by a positive intention.*

All behavior no matter how weird, destructive or bizarre is motivated by a positive intention. There is a benefit that is being derived by acting in that manner. People are always only doing the best they can with what they know. This goes back to the Law of Cause and Effect.

Although you may swear up and down that you want to lose weight and get fit, you may find yourself obsessing constantly about what you will eat, how much, what it will taste like and when you'll eat it. Food, food, food. Food and the acquisition of it takes center stage making that the most important thing in your life.

You may notice that your eating is out of control, the pounds are creeping up and you hate to look in the mirror. You stand by, feeling helpless, watching and judging yourself as a failure, wishing that you could change, get back in control, be more disciplined, get some backbone, show some will power, start losing weight, yet nothing helps. Food keeps calling your name. You feel like a victim of your circumstances and want to give up.

This is the primary reason why diets don't work, because diets don't address the emotions that push us to eat. As an effect of some experience your subconscious mind is conditioned to believe that you either don't deserve to be thin and happy or that you are incapable of achieving that, or that it's not safe.

Unbeknownst to you, your behavior is being controlled by an unconscious part of you that for some reason needs to keep you in patterns of overeating in an attempt to feel secure. In order to upset the apple cart, address the screaming meanie negative self talk, bust through your fears and emotional blocks that are currently pushing your hungry buttons, you have to find alternate ways of satisfying the needs that food is currently filling.

In learning to make friends with your body, it's important to keep in mind that every behavior has a context in which it's appropriate. The stubbornness and aggressive manner that gets you the deal in the boardroom may not be perceived as useful talking to yourself on a day when everything seems to have hit the skids. In order to achieve the best connection with yourself and others, always be willing to be flexible, curious and respectful.

### *It's Not Failure, only Feedback*

It's so easy for us think that we've failed if we don't get the result or outcome that we desire. That's an effect of the black and white thinking that you're conditioned to accept as a dieter. In terms of handling the times that you overeat, consider this:

**Deleted:** *There is no such thing as failure, only feedback.*¶

¶ When you make these assumptions, you can learn something in any situation, no matter how unpleasant.¶

**Deleted:** *Each of us has the resources to meet our next developmental challenge.*¶

¶ When you make this assumption, you can notice accomplishments and potential-rather than deficiencies-in yourself and others.¶

When you mention getting back in the saddle that presupposes that you have fallen out of the saddle. That's screaming diet thinking to me because it presumes that there is right behavior and wrong behavior. It's like either passing or failing on a test. We're so hard on ourselves, aren't we? I'm guessing that there is a part of you that is shaking a finger and blaming you and saying, you should have, you could have, if only... you screwed up, you failure, all that kind of bubble bustin' joy suckin' sass.

As a professional coach, and Master Practitioner of NLP, I've been trained to think about the word, "failure" in a different way. Next time you're quick to judge yourself and label yourself a "failure" think of "your failure in terms of a time line that has been prematurely cut short. If you look at extending that time line and doing something different that will yield a different result, it's no longer failure, but now it's perceived as feedback.

Now imagine that your time line is endless. You can never fail, unless of course you make the choice to give up and then you have an exit strategy. Failure doesn't happen to us, we choose to stop doing whatever is needed in order to achieve the goal. It's a choice, not a sentence.

This is why my favorite NLP Presupposition is:

"It's not failure, only feedback."

Last year when I spoke with Connirae Andreas, one of the original co-founders of NLP and the creator of the Naturally Slender Eating Strategy, I asked her why was I still bingeing and what was wrong with me?

She explained to me that my binges were giving me valuable messages that I needed to tune into in order to satisfy those urges beyond eating. Like many of you, I said to myself, "I'm a failure. I can't do this. This doesn't work for me."

Then I started asking myself different questions. I'll teach you all about asking yourself empowering questions in the chapter on "Coping with Your Stress." It's called Affirmations. Here is an example of some of my questions:

How can I make this work for me?  
What part of this is not working for me?  
What part of this is working that I want more of?  
What do I need to do right now to make that happen?

For me, the answer was that I needed to get very specific and handle my stress in a more direct way. It wasn't enough for me to let my feelings float over me and sit with them because I had no way of handling that tidal wave of emotion that came from that degree of overwhelm. It only made me want to eat more. That was when I realized that I had to go looking for another solution that was out of the box. – because I remembered that "I

had all the resources I needed to accomplish what I wanted,” and you do too. That’s another NLP Presupposition. Here it is:

*People already have all the resources they need to accomplish whatever they want*

You, me, everyone already has the internal resources we need to accomplish any goal we desire. There’s a saying that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger and that God only gives you what you can handle. It’s all the same meaning.

No body but you is capable of making changes in your life. Even though people can support you and try to help you to achieve your goals, nobody can do the work for you. It’s 100% your responsibility to take care of you and make sure that you are happy. Each of us has the capacity to grow and change as part of our internal operating system. Richard Bandler and John Grinder realized that our brains function much like a computer in that we can upgrade and make changes, delete old programs and install new ones. As humans, we have an enormous capacity for learning new things and implementing that information to change and improve our lives. We can learn anything easily as long as it is taught in small enough chunks.

You already have the capacity to change and balance your relationship with food and love your body, because you already know how to nurture and love. You may be using that skill in a relationship as someone’s mother, or grandmother, or sister or best friend, but it’s the same basic method.

By taking the information that I share with you and learning it in manageable and easy to bite chunks, you can test out new strategies and processes and notice how they feel to you, what effect they have on your life and whether they worked for you or not. You already have an internal wisdom and awareness that tells you without question that you are the final authority in your life, nobody else.

*People are designed to communicate*

It’s impossible for people not to communicate with one another. Communication is a necessary part of our lives and our world. We can either use our skills to communicate with others verbally by speaking and saying what’s on our mind, or we can use the vast range of our body language to inform people of our intentions and feeling, or we can be completely reserved and hold an entire conversation in our head or we can do all three things at the same time.

When you make this assumption, you push the envelope in getting specific in clarifying what you want, and clearly conveying your thoughts to the listener. Holding this assumption means that you are taking 100% responsibility for your communication and recognizing that the response you get is only feedback. By paying attention to the results you are getting and using this information to guide your behavior, you will move closer to your outcome.

Virginia Satir was a well recognized, much loved and highly respected pioneer in the field of modern psychology. She was a therapist, author and speaker who brought the importance of true communication to light. She is considered to be a living legend in her work and writing. In fact, as you'll recall she was one of the three original masters who were observed by Bandler and Grinder.

Dr. Satir discovered that there are two dialogs that are interacting within a person at any given time. Both are unconscious. One is a dialog of words, the other is a dialog of feeling. To quote her, she says that, "We are communicating messages all the time and we also communicate messages about those messages. Those different levels come from two different places in the person. They are not an attempt to hurt anyone.

These are called double level messages. "The words come from the left brain what you should do, the other part comes from the right brain. Suppose that I have a rule that says that I should never complain to you. Let's say I'm in angry at you and you ask me how I am and I say I'm fine, putting emphasis on the word, "fine" as I bar my teeth and hold my head firmly.

It is obvious to the observer that your words and gestures don't match up. This is called being incongruent. Reading body language is a great way to find out what other people are thinking.

One very important part of this presupposition is that the meaning of your communication is the response you get, despite your intentions. Many people don't realize the potency of their words and body language and are completely unaware of how strongly we affect others. There's a delightful saying that I learned when I was a child that says, "you attract more flies with honey than with vinegar."

When you begin to set boundaries with others and take better care of yourself, it's natural that it will feel uncomfortable and people will test your resolve, trying to push themselves on you and make you feel guilty about choosing self care. Remember their response is not personal, they are only feeling threatened that some element of your relationship with them will change and that they will suffer a loss.

It's up to you to create a new agreement and set down boundaries that work for you by speaking from your heart, being willing to be vulnerable and showing the other person respect. Your ability to set boundaries and communicate effectively reflects upon how much you respect yourself, your time, your values and you body. By respecting how you feel, and acting with integrity on your feelings, people will learn to respect you. We are always teaching people how we want to be treated. If you don't like the way that you're being treated by someone, don't blame them, change how you treat yourself.

Experience has a structure.

Our thoughts and memories have a pattern to them. They are wired in our brain in a certain predictable pattern. Each time you engage in a behavior, a part of your brain lights up like a circuit board. Each time you think about the habit, the same parts of the brain light up. You don't even have to do anything. This is because your mind and body are one system. When you change the way that you think about the behavior, your experience will automatically change. We can neutralize unpleasant memories and enrich memories that will serve us.

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Right now you are seeking to create a new relationship with food and your body. This requires being able to see yourself in a different more empowered, loving light. In order to topple the negative affects of your former history with dieting, and feeling uncomfortable in your body, I will teach you many strategies that will help you to question your old beliefs, change negative feelings to positive ones and catch yourself doing things right.

Be flexible.

If what you are doing isn't working, try something else! This pre-supposition comes from Cybernetics and is called the law of requisite variety. It states that, in any interaction, the person with the widest repertoire of behaviors will have the most influence. This means that if you are flexible in your approach, and willing to switch gears in order to gain the greatest rapport, you will eventually achieve your outcome.

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Children are innately brilliant at doing this. Unlike an adult that may shrink in response to a rejection, a persistent child knows exactly how to turn the situation on its end to achieve their benefit. If Mommy says "No" you can't have an ice cream cone, they scamper happily over to daddy, grandpa, or grandma and ask for what they want. Faced with another negative response, they may scowl, cry, lay down on the floor, kicking and screaming- hoping that someone will give in, eventually hoping that one of their behaviors will give them what they want—the ice cream cone.

There is much that we can learn from children' skillful strategies in pursuit of going after a goal. Rejection or lack of response only makes them more determined. They are unwilling to give up. They are single minded in their focus, yet able to consistently vary their behavior until they achieve their goal..

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There will be much trial and error along the road to recovery. You'll hit many stumbling blocks and get frustrated and angry. You may even consider returning back to dieting, although I hope not. By using the stress relief tools that I share here in the book, you will acquire more flexibility and willingness, increasing your capacity for learning what works and what doesn't.

As the pre-supposition states, there is no failure only feedback. You can win the self esteem/love your body game, but you have to be willing to play. Are you ready to have

some fun and play? Great. Let's follow up and I'll explain to you why diets really, really, really don't work and why your thoughts are making you fat!