



How I Used the Power of Anchors to Encourage a Shy, Withdrawn 5 Year Old Girl to Speak

NeuroLinguistic Programming, or NLP, is a much used tool in many coaching practices but the tool can, and should, be applied to situations in our every day lives as NLP has several techniques for diagnosing and intervening in certain situations. In this story, I would like to share how I was able to apply the technique of Anchoring to encourage a young girl to speak.

Let's Meet Erica.

Erica is an engaging and beautiful five year-old: a mess of long brown hair, expressive eyes and a delicate air of innocence. Erica, like many little girls, is a proud member of a Brownie Troop.

Unlike most girls, however, Erica never spoke. Outside her home, Erica transformed into a shy flower who was terrified to make herself heard.

Week after week, Erica would attend her troop meetings and pass them in total silence. After seven months of silent participation, the girls were offered an opportunity to present a play to a group of younger Girl Scouts. I wanted to ensure that Erica did not miss out on the incredible opportunity to collaborate with the girls in her troop and share in the joy of post-performance accomplishment.

The girls were charged with creating the entire play: writing the script, preparing costumes and producing the play. Erica would sit silently, working diligently at the tasks the other girls assigned. Because of her inability to feel confident speaking to the troop, she was missing out on a chance to be heard and fully contribute her special beauty to the play.

Determined that no child be left out, I gathered the girls together one evening and began teaching them an NLP technique called Anchoring.

An anchor is a unique stimulus that involves multiple senses to stimulate and stir the brain to remember and recall a particular resource. It is a way to get in touch with a specific feeling, recall and recreate it in the body at will.

As Erica's Troop Leader, I approached Erica and asked her, "Erica, can you say, I'm a strawberry?" Erica's face turned a deep shade of crimson and her eyes drifted to her shoes. Her reply was barely audible: "...bewwy" she mumbled rather unintelligibly.

I couldn't help but notice the incredible degree of courage it took for Erica to reply and I was determined to reinforce Erica's personal triumph. I knelt down on one knee so as to be eye-to-eye with Erica and gazed into her eyes, smiled and said "Erica, you have the most beautiful

voice that I had ever heard. Your words and thoughts are a precious gift. Thank you for sharing your voice with me. Could you please say them one more time so that we could all listen?"

Then I directed the other girls to surround Erica. All the girls in the troop loved Erica and wanted to support her in her first tentative verbal steps. They waited for Erica to speak. Erica smiled tentatively and said the word, "bewwy" again. The next thing I knew that I needed to do was to guide each girl to make full eye contact with Erica. They all took turns making full eye contact with her, smiling, applauding and hugging her. Through their collective actions, the troop showered Erica with multiple images and feelings of positive reinforcement.

After she got that initial reinforcement, I coaxed another sentence out of Erica and another response from the troop, guiding Erica to touch her hand in a unique way as the girls began to respond lovingly to her words, knowing that the touch would enable Erica to reproduce the same feelings of support on her own. The next time that she spoke the word "bewwy" she smiled with pride, knowing that she had accomplished something great and that she was loved and valued.

By the end of that session, Erica was talking a blue streak. She was saying things like, "I wuv giwl scouts and I have de best weader." The simple little change that Erica felt and experienced that day is just a small building block to the foundation that she will need to become a woman who is strong and self empowered, capable of leading others like her to their own healing.

The NLP Anchoring process can be broken down into four steps. For ease of illustration, we'll use confidence as the desired feeling. Everyone can use a little more confidence. As you read through each of the steps, take time to reflect and respond.

1. Recall a time in your life when you felt confident.

Allow your mind to run a movie of that memory. See what you were seeing, feel what you felt at that time. If there were sounds, hear those sounds, tune into what you were saying to yourself and how you felt about that. Make the memory vivid and as real as you possibly can. Use your imagination. Now kick it up a notch to expand all the senses. Make the colors brighter, the images larger and the sounds more clear and vibrant, you might even want to add a soundtrack of your favorite music, whatever you can do to make the image unique and more powerful is best and most effective for best results.

2. Choose a place on your body where you will touch yourself or use an object to remind you of that feeling of the time when you felt confident (ie use a keychain or a small hand held object.)

You can also visualize a symbol that represents the meaning of what you want to anchor. For example, you could visualize making a fist and putting it up into the air in a power move and saying, "Yes!" Now combine that touch with the actual memory. Right before the point in the movie when the feeling is the most intense, you fire off the anchor by using the unique touch or any other method of anchoring that you have chosen.

3. Repeat the process.

Think of the time when you felt confident and fire off the anchor by touching the object, visualizing the image, hearing the sounds, feeling the sensations in your body or creating that unique touch.

4. Test it out.

Fire off the anchor. You should expect to be instantly transported to a time in your memory when you felt confident. If not, repeat the process until you get the desired feeling on demand. And finally: Remember to have fun! NLP is a great process that works surprisingly well – magically transforming negative situations (or collapsing negative anchors) and installing new empowering ones. Isn't it time you started chopping some of those daunting memories that have been preventing you from being the best person you can be?

About the Author

Andrea Amador, Certified Energy Coach and Master Practitioner of Neuro Linguistic Programming and Ericksonian Hypnosis, uses powerful changework methods including coaching, Neuro Linguistic Programming, Emotional Freedom Technique, Tapas Acupressure Technique and ZPoint Process to inspire women to control their bodies, overcome their fears, pare down the pounds, focus on their gifts, get unstuck and love themselves more. Through her company **The Juicy Woman**, she inspires women to live juicy, embrace their experience and spice up their lives.

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