



Taking The First Step

by KAREN Summers

Taking the first step to go further down the road of learning more about NLP was an exciting moment for me. It felt the right thing to do at the stage I had reached in my life journey (both professionally and personally). I knew that I was standing at the precipice of endless possibilities and wanted to explore what might happen if I took the first step of learning and experiencing some of the many rich and varied techniques of NLP - "For things to change, I must change.

In order for me to reflect upon my key learnings from the 4-day NLP Diploma, I need to divide my learning into two main headings: key learnings that have occurred and impacted on my professional life and key learnings that have affected my personal life.

As a teacher, the first place I am keen to use and practise some of my learning is the classroom! I had discovered on the Diploma that my preferred Representational System was predominantly auditory and visual. My first step therefore, was to discover what type of learners were the 29 children sitting in front of me everyday! After a preliminary chat with my class about how we like to learn, each of the children completed a "What's your preferred Sensory System?" sheet. I then worked out what kind of learning style they preferred and made a note of it against their names in the class

register. The majority of children were kinaesthetic in their preferred learning style. I was not too surprised as they are very much a "hands on" class - they're not too keen on listening and watching!! Interestingly, the gender balance in my class is 21 boys and 8 girls!

Following on from this, I asked all the other teachers in the Junior School at which I work to do the same tests with their classes (some of the language was adapted for the younger year groups). I have encouraged all the teachers to use this knowledge about their children to assist them in planning the delivery of their lessons, e.g. if Year 3 are predominantly visual learners then how can we develop their auditory and kinaesthetic sensory systems?

The quest to ensure that all representational systems are catered for in our teaching has come much more to the fore. When the core co-ordinators in English, Maths and Science monitor each year groups plans, one of the elements they look for is to check that there is not too much or too little of one particular learning style (see attached example A). As a teacher, it has been illuminating to see at a glance (in the form of pie charts and bar charts) the balance of VAK in our termly teaching plans. The next step I perceive, is to explain the Learning Styles - Metaprogrammes at a Staff INSET in the Spring Term so that teachers can use this information to help them to deal with pupils with challenging behaviour, e.g. how do the children with behavioural needs code their experience? How can we discover their map of reality?

I have tried to use my

understanding of Metaprogrammes in my daily classroom management in many different ways. For example, at the beginning of the day I run through what activities are going to be taking place. For "Big Chunk" children I give an over view of what activities will be taking place. For "Small Chunk" children, I add detail. This may take the form of "you may need your protractors for this activity and Mrs Fowler our Learning Support Assistant will be helping us.

When setting homework, I give team points for those who are motivated by achievement e.g. "Towards" children and have established with the Head Teacher that those who do not complete homework on time will not be able to take part in football/netball practice after school or represent the school in matches that week. I recognise that this suits "Away" children. Like Persil washing powder, this definitely works!

During the Literacy Hour, I organise the children to work in mixed ability table groups. As part of their preparation for their SATs KS2 Writing paper they need to be able to recognise and use all the features of non-fiction writing. In order to help them remember all the various features of this kind of writing I ask them to take part in tasks that suit match/mismatch preferences, e.g. "What are the key features of a balanced argument (matcher) and how is it different to the features of a leaflet? (mismatcher). The group dynamics encourage both proactive and reactive styles because as I eavesdrop on conversations that children have while engaged on the task, I hear the reactive style children analysing what the task is all about whilst the proactive children organises how the

group will present their findings!

Whenever it is possible, I ask the class for their "take" on how as a class we could best organise some of our learning activities. The "options" children in my class (and there are quite a few!) have developed alternatives for some of our SATs revision which has absolutely delighted me! I was able to walk around my classroom whilst all the children in groups organised their own method of revision after doing a series of SATs papers. What formerly used to be a nightmare to teach has worked beautifully! My colleague in the parallel class has now incorporated this way of doing her SATs revision – her children did their own version!

The impact of VAK in the classroom is limitless. I have tried to use some of my key learning when the children pray. I work in a Catholic school and the children say prayers at regular intervals during the day. Sometimes their prayers are simply a time for quiet reflection. So for example, if I ask them to think of a time when they have had to trust (in God and each other) I ask them what do they see/hear/feel/smell/taste (where appropriate) in order to help be in their prayer rather than just saying words in the style of a formal prayer. This seems to create an atmosphere of rapport - all is still in the classroom - most of the children seem to like to close their eyes unbidden as well. I feel that it gets them into the correct "state" for praying. I have also experimented with using it in whole school assemblies!!

Another way to change the state of the children in my class occurs when they come in from the playground noisy and disorganised at the start of the day. Using the techniques we learned on the NLP Diploma, I now try to use embedded questions in order to get them to sit down quickly and quietly and start their registration task. "I wonder who will be the first table to earn points for all doing the registration task?" and

embedded commands "I'm curious about which table will take the shortest amount of time to be doing the registration task." It sure beats repeating the same request over a hubbub of noise!



With a child in my class who has been having "temper tantrums" within the class and on the playground, I have tried to use well-formed outcomes (POWEERR) in order to help him control his anger. The child has an "away from" metaprogramme and dislikes the situations that arise when he exhibits anger, e.g. friends and adults get annoyed and frustrated with him, there are disagreements between friendship groups, etc. Together we have discussed "present" state and "desired" state. I have asked him to think of a time when he has felt relaxed and calm. I have tried to "anchor" the relaxed state and we meet every few weeks to see if he has been able to fire his anchor at times of crisis!

Managing my own "state" in the classroom is also of paramount importance. Being aware of the "state" I am in and then eliciting the "state" I would like to be in has been a key learning for me in both my professional and personal life. I use music (auditory preference) at the beginning and end of my working day to change the state I am in. There is a quote I have which I read in order to remind myself of the power I have over myself (we already have all the resources we need). See attached example B.

I have become even more of a "people watcher" since doing the NLP Diploma. Family, friends and work colleagues accuse me of "NLPing" them! I am aware of body matching, mirroring and

cross-matching whenever I communicate with people or observe others in communication. I have actively tried to use matching body language and have found it especially useful in marital disputes!!

Having had two fairly recent bereavements, I have used the "disassociated" state in order to help me with the more intense feelings that grief arouses in me. Seeing myself through my own eyes has enabled me to observe the way I grieve and to look upon my grief in a more objective way. This has been an important learning for me. I try to use the "disassociated" state when I want to step back from the intensity of sorrow.

I feel that recognising the different metaprogrammes of the people that I work with has enabled me to be in greater rapport with them. One of my colleagues who is a "small detail" person would often query some of my ideas in staff meetings (I think that I am a "big chunk" person) or so it would appear to me! I now try to make sure that I have communicated some of the finer details to her or else have asked her what she feels is unclear so that I am able to communicate my bigger picture to her. I also appreciate that my annoyance with her questions says more about me!

When I started to evaluate my own key learning I was amazed at the amount of examples I could recall. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to refer to all of them in this essay. However, it has helped me to reflect and understand how much of my own key learning has become embedded in my teaching and in the way I now view my life (the map is not the territory). Once again I feel excited at the endless opportunities my voyage on the NLP ship is giving me. Slowly, very slowly, I am losing sight of the shore!

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