Frogs Into Princes

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♥ Ibrahim ♥ says

Not my cup of tea. The style of writing difficult to follow, and that causes frustration.

Joe says

This is a great intro into classic NLP. Many of today's books have been distorted with the authors personal views. This gets back to basics.

Amazing how such subtle uses of language can make such difference to the results you get.

Rob says

Imagine an Unfunny George Carlin, He did have a few good points but they were far and few between. I would recommend Anthony Robbins or Brian Tracey, for a better experience.

Creative Choices says

I truly enjoyed this book. It was written in a seminar format from a workshop he presented. Some people find this style of writing difficult to follow but personally I enjoy it. For anyone seeking knowledge about NLP for Alternative & Cognitive Behavioral therapies, this is a great place to start (although would be my 'second' recommendation with "The Heart of the Mind" by Connirae Andreas being my first).

Just one of Many of Bandler's (and Grinder's) older Gems this book was a real inspiration for me when I was first learning about NLP. At the time I read every book I could find that they had written together and not one of them disappointed on content.

NOTE: The following part of this review will be repeated from other NLP Reviews I post by the same author.

I am probably a little partial because I truly appreciate the author of this book and what he had done on so many levels. There are so many ways our culture today has been 'inspired' and/or changed by his work yet so few people even know who he is in our country. Most marketing giants, political leaders, and sales industries use his techniques in everyday. But some of the most important areas his work has touched is still just being discovered in the cognitive behavior and alternative health industry. These techniques are so universal I see them repeated in many books, seminars, workshops etc. Yet there are so few that actually understand where the information originated from.

Mirek Kukla says

Overview

"Frogs Into Princes" three-part introduction to NLP (short for "Neuro Linguistic Programming"), a form of therapy conceived of in the 1970s. NLP is founded on the premise that "the kinds of problems that people have usually have nothing to do with content; they have to do with the *structure*, the *form* of how they organize their experience." (47) The central thesis of NLP, then, is that the best way to help others overcome emotional, behavior, and psychosomatic problems is to discern the processes by which they organize and access their thoughts and feeling and alter it.

Process matters

It's ironic, then, "Frogs Into Princes" fundamentally fails to convey it's central message due it's lazy structure and disorganized presentation. Yes, process matters - as in therapy, so in literature. "Frogs Into Princes" is essentially a transcript of a three-day seminar. It's as if the publisher came across a recording, transcribed it in its entirety, stamped on a nonsensical title, and called it a day. In the forward, the authors somewhat guiltily admit that this is "a record of a story that was *told*", and that they would like to "reassure the reader that the non-sequiturs, the surprising tangents, the unannounced shifts in content, mood or direction... had a compelling logic of their own in the original context." And perhaps they did. But here, they only serve to confuse and otherwise detract from what might have otherwise been an interesting message.

Onto content, then. The "book" is "organized" into three parts, each corresponding to one-day of the seminar. The subject matter of each day is somewhat disconnected, though the central theme of "content-free process therapy" is evident throughout. Let's examine each day in turn.

Day 1: sensory experience

Day one is all about sensory experience, and how to read the subtle cues that reveal the systematically different ways we each process, store, and access our feelings. The idea here is that different information is stored using different "representational systems" (visual, auditory, etc). The hope is that once you've determined which "representational system" a person uses, you can then employ this system to better communicate with them.

How, then, do people cue you in on how they're accessing information? Primarily with eye movements, it seems. If they look down and to their right, they're accessing kinesthetic feelings; up and to their left, visually constructed images; and so on. Besides having a sort of pop-psychological appeal, this idea has something awesome going for it: *it's a testable hypothesis*.

Unfortunately, the authors don't bother citing empirical evidence. Instead, they call out a person or two from the crowd, and give forceful, guided demonstrations: *this* is what you were thinking, Mary. Isn't it? (um... well, yea, I guess it is). I guess I didn't find these primed, sample-size-of-one experiments very convincing. In fact, I did my own sample-size-of-one experiment with an unsuspecting subject: the results were less than spectacular. Some cursory googling indicates that experimental evidence is weak. There might be a rough correlation between eye movements and representation system, but otherwise - nothing to see here.

Day 2: changing personal history and organization

Day two is a bit more concrete, from a therapeutic perspective: the author's start to talk about things to *do* in a therapeutic setting to help people resolve their issues. The authors start by noting that "the relationship between your experience and what *actually* occurred is tenuous at best... Made up memories can change you just as well as the arbitrary perceptions that you made up at the time about 'real world events'." (97) The idea is that you can change the way people cope with unpleasant memories by giving them new ways to process those memories. The methodology here can be summarized as content-free guided meditation, with a dash of pavlovian conditioning.

The therapist begins by asking the client to go back in time and relive the unpleasant experience. While this is happening, the therapist "anchors" the memory by say, touching the client in a certain way, or by taking on a certain tone. The same thing is done with a behavior or emotional tool the client *wishes* they'd had at the time. Finally, the therapist "binds" the emotional resource to the unpleasant memory, essentially telling the client: 'next time you feel or see *this* (the bad thing), feel *this* (the resource anchor)'.

Note that throughout, the therapist has no idea what the "bad thing" is, nor what the "good resource" is - he or she simply gives content-agnostic process instructions. This approach doesn't really resonate with me personally, but I can imagine it might work for some.

Day 3: finding new ways

Whereas day 2 is mostly concerned with overcoming phobias and coping with past memories, day 3 is all about modifying your current behavior. The main practice advocated here is called "reframing" - a "specific was of contacting the portion or part... of a person causing a certain behavior to occur." (138) The point of reframing is to "find out what the secondary gain of [and undesirable] behavior is," (138) with the ultimate goal of creating a new, alternative pattern to replace the old one.

The NLP therapist attempts to "speak privately with your unconscious mind" (152) in, as always, a content-free manner. The interaction goes something like this: "let's give the code name X to the pattern of behavior you presently have, which you would rather replace with something else more appropriate." (139) "Go inside for a moment and ask a question... Your job... is simply to attend to any changes you sense in your body sensations." (140) "The question I would like you to ask is 'will the part of me responsible for pattern X communicate with me in consciousness?'" (141) and so on. The therapist is simply a sort of consultant, instruct the client on how to proceed, without ever directly discussing the content of "pattern X."

Again, this circuitous, procedural way of going about things doesn't really appeal to me, but that's not to say it doesn't work. Indeed, this way of 'speaking with your unconscious mind' is not unheard of in therapy. It turns out to be foundation for an established therapeutic model called "Internal Family Systems," where consciousness is viewed as being composed of various "parts" or unconscious "sub-personalities." That said, this isn't a strong vote of confidence for "Neuro Linguistic Programming". Indeed, the primary criticism of IFS is that there is no empirical evidence to back it up - a concern that, it seems to me, is strikingly applicable here.

If it doesn't work, it's because you don't believe

So, we've discussed the content of NLP. The question now is: does it work? As I've now alluded to more

than once, the authors don't offer much in the way of objective evidence. Support is provided in the form of stage demonstrations, wherein willing participants are forcefully pushed towards whatever outcome the instructors desire. As stated in the preface, this might have been compelling in the original context, but here, even if instructive, it's rather unconvincing.

Perhaps what irked me most about this book, however, is the extent to which the authors describe their theory as unfalsifiable. Some quotes are in order: "You will try it and it won't work. However, *that's not a comment on the method. That's a comment about not being creative enough in the application of it*, and not having enough sensory experience to accept all the cues that are there [emphasis mine]." (164) Elsewhere, we're told that there are only two ways to fail with this material. One is to be too rigid. The other is to not 'believe in it': "If there's a part of you that really doesn't believe that phobias can be done in three minutes, but you decide to try it anyway, that incongruence will show up in your non-verbal communication, and that will blow the whole thing" (178) The implication, of course, is that if NLP isn't working, you're either not doing it right, or you simply 'don't believe.'

This is nothing more than the excuse of the ineffectual miracle worker, who defends himself by arguing that prayer *always works*. And when it doesn't, it's because you never really "believed" in the first place. This kind of reasoning drives me absolutely crazy. Outside the realm of pure mathematics, if a theory is unfalsifiable, it's absolutely uninteresting. This kind of solipsistic reasoning about abounds, and greatly detracts from the author's credibility throughout.

Summary

"Frogs and Princes" is full of interesting, underdeveloped, and unsubstantiated ideas. The idea of content-free therapy is interesting and provocative, and I do hope it's been examined in greater detail elsewhere. I'm intrigued by the idea of representational systems, and I like the authors' constant reminders that "when you do something that doesn't work, do something *else*" (160) - even if complete flexibility detracts from the viability of NLP as a well-defined therapeutic model.

As a work of informative piece of nonfiction, however, the book fails. Thoughtful organization and carefully reasoned arguments be damned: this is hurried transcript of a three-day seminar, and it shows. The end result, even if interesting, is ultimately unconvincing. Maybe NLP works - or maybe, it works for you. In any event, this probably isn't the best place to find out.

Burhan Abbasi says

A great book, not sure if its the right one for starting off with NLP since it was my first. Will need to read again if I am to apply the techniques discussed in the book but it gave me a fairly good idea regarding NLP

Taha Zghoul says

NLP is an approach to communication, personal development, and psychotherapy.

There is a difference between what we experience and how we represent it. Our words connect to our experiences. Someone else's words connect to their experiences. The word may be the same but the experience won't be.

As human beings, we input output and process information about the territory around us. Our five sensory systems code this information. Our five senses (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory) are the language of our brain.

The NLP term for these five sensory systems is Representational Systems. When people communicate, they translate their experience into words. Language is a representation of our sensory representations, a map of another map. Words have no built in meaning. Words only have meaning in that they trigger sensory representations in a speaker or listener.

Frogs Into Princes is a transcript from a live seminar conducted by the Bandler and Grinder. Because the seminar was for therapists, most of the techniques' applications are discussed in a therapist-patient scenario. Therapists and psychologists will find the applications of the techniques extremely useful for improving therapeutic communication with patients.

The book is divided into three main sections, which were presented on three separate days at the seminar:
1.Sensory Experience: Representational Systems and Accessing Cues
2.Changing Personal History and Organization: Anchoring
3.Finding New Ways: Reframing

Xenophon Hendrix says

Take with a boulder of salt.

Marc Anderson says

Very good.

Laurent Videau says

Interesting book on how to consciously influence others to agree with you or support your recommandations.

We are all influenced inconcsciouly by myriads of body language cues and these can be used to your advantage.

You can also detect in others, through their body language, and particularly their eyes mouvement, wheter or not they tell the truth or are constructing a story.

Brooke says

I couldn't finish it, I tried and tried but it was so dry and I finally set it down.

Ivan Voras says

A transcription of one of Bandler and Grinder's seminars, and The introduction for how and why NLP got started. It's a tool for improving lives.

Donal Phipps says

It's definitely an interesting read.

It reminds me of a time once when I was sat in my home on a bright winter's afternoon, reading a book. The story in the book was about 2 men who were geniuses at misdirection, presupposition and the lofty art of bull__t. And they profited handsomely from these impressive skills, offering little more than metaphors as proof of their efficacy, belittling those who challenged their methods.
And I turned to the characters in the book, and said "you brilliant, brilliant crapheads".

I was repelled by some of the tactics employed, but this repulsion pales in significance next to the many interesting and new perspectives which you are presented with.

Damien says

Like several books by Richard Bandler, this is actually a transcript of a three-day seminar. At this point I want to give up on the books and book a seminar instead.

Despite that, I was able to glean a lot of great information out of "Frogs into Princes." Most of it dealt with non-verbal communication, in contrast to "Structure of Magic" and other NLP texts. Not being able to see the demonstrations was a hindrance, but I still learned enough for the book to be worthwhile and to help me see where I need to go next.

Bryn says

I have never been able to tell if this book is completely unintelligible or really profound.