



freshwaysforward

∞ Discovering You

How does language shape your world?

One of the most powerful ideas emphasised in the field of NLP is this: our reality is created through language and perceptions. This means that the words we use and how we think about something, determine what we experience. So how do you think about yourself, others? About what's possible or impossible?

It is through language that we make sense of the world, decipher what is true, what is important, how we think and feel about our experiences, others, and ourselves. Everything. Words enable us to learn, teach, buy groceries, write an email or letter to a far away friend, or read about what is happening in another town or country. Language allows us to communicate with each other, discuss plans, make choices.

Would you like to have choice about how language influences your life and wellbeing? You can, and easily. For example:

- Just being aware of the messages around you and in the media will make a difference
- Being aware of how we're talking to ourselves can change how we feel

Thus, what follows is an invitation to trial these perspectives and discover what a difference they can make.

Firstly is **awareness of the messages around you**. And there are many! Current research tells us that at an unconscious level, our brain takes in 2000 bits of information every second, and that we are aware of just 134 bits. This means that in any moment, over fourteen times more information is coming into our brain than we are consciously aware of; soaking up information like a sponge soaks up water.

Additionally, we live in a world brimming with information: the internet has created an explosion of knowledge sharing that defies geography and time. There is an abundance of understanding at the touch of a keyboard. And there are so many ideas to be sold: outdoor advertising towering above us on billboards, beside us on vehicles, on bus shelters, buildings, pouring out of the TV, radio, newspapers ... phew!

What does this constant barrage mean for us? Increasing our awareness is key. Driving along the motorway recently, I saw a billboard advertising skincare. It said in very large letters: "Because laughter lines aren't really very funny". Of course, the beauty industry is notorious for providing less than useful messages to us, but how aware are we of those messages coming in to us? I sat there in traffic initially thinking to myself: "I'm not amused" (excuse the pun) and then, "why would I buy a product that represented that kind of attitude?" It's always our choice.

I received a letter in the mail recently from an overseas bank that I am a customer of, and it said they could "help you avoid slipping into the red". "Well, I thought to myself, "I hadn't thought about slipping into the red until now." Into the shredder it went. Again, it's always our choice what we take in, believe, question and challenge.

Secondly, **how we talk to ourselves will quite obviously impact how we feel**. As I've discussed before, we do six things in our head: create and remember pictures, sounds, feelings, tastes, smells and self talk. These are always linked. For example, if we take a moment to remember a great job we did at work recently, we might say to ourselves "that was brilliant, I'm so glad it went well" (self talk) and get a good feeling.

What happens, though, when it doesn't go so well? Here it is helpful to remember that **there is no failure, only feedback**. If you are someone who drives a car, you will know that you only know how to drive one because you

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know what *not* to do. You only know that because you've probably done it. When you were learning, perhaps you took your foot off the clutch too soon and created a bunny-hop effect, or braked too suddenly on a corner. Either way, you learned what you needed to do instead; it's useful. So what kind of language would support this idea? What could we say to ourselves?

You don't have to be a linguistics professor to work this out! It's as simple as noticing what you did do well – especially all the effort and energy you've put in – and noticing what you want to change for next time. It's like being your own personal coach. And coaches focus on:

- What is going well
- What else you want to be achieving
- Encouraging you to get there

Thus, language can create a whole new experience of learning, progressing and succeeding.

NLP teaches us that there are many patterns running at an unconscious level that are more easily changed using specific techniques. However, we also have conscious choice in any given moment to think, feel or act differently. How we use language is one of those choices. Have fun with increasing your awareness and choosing your words: create your own reality!



"Fortunately, most children learn to walk before they can be told how to by their parents."

- W. Timothy Gallway

Tid bits and tips: Easing yourself into winter

I don't know about you, but I sometimes dread the onslaught of winter and shorter days. Luckily we've been blessed with some beautiful sunshine in Auckland over the last couple of days, and here are some tips for (more happily) embracing the cooler months:

◆ Enjoy rediscovering your winter wardrobe

I guess this one is more for women than men, but not necessarily so! It can be quite fun pulling out clothes from the back of the wardrobe you haven't seen for a while. And why not host a clothes swapping party with friends to refresh your options? Serve mulled wine and warm savouries, and drop off remaining clothes to Women's Refuge – everybody wins!

◆ Get yourself a massage

Massage is a lovely way to warm the body, improve circulation and pamper yourself. Follow it with a hot bath or spa to really warm up and relax.

◆ Discover the joy of cooking with a tagine or pressure cooker

It's amazing how good simple ingredients can taste when they've been in a tagine with a sprinkle of cumin, or slowly cooked in a pressure cooker – just divine with steamed rice, quinoa or baked sweet potato. Hearty and heart warming! Look out for these recipe books: *Made in Morocco* by Julie Le Clerc and John Bougen and *Jamie's Dinners* by none other than Jamie Oliver.

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