

Neuro Linguistic Programming: A Pathway to Wellbeing



Mental Health Awareness Conference: Winning Ways to Wellbeing Conference Address by Karen Ross

Good morning everyone, and Kia Ora

It feels great to be here, it's great to be hearing some wonderful perspectives on wellbeing and seeing so much passion for creating wellbeing in the community. I'm especially excited to be here as this is very much what my work is about – helping people live better lives.

I am an NLP Master Practitioner, I have a Management degree (BMS *hons*) with a background in management skills training, and for the last three years have established a private practice for coaching and therapy. I am joined by my colleagues, Kail Watson (NLP Practitioner) and Des Shinnick (NLP Master Practitioner).

Today I'm going to talk about what NLP is, how it helps with enhancing wellbeing, how we work with typical problems your consumers are facing and I will often use an example of working with depression, since this is increasingly prevalent in society, and especially growing among children, and because one example is easy to fit into the time we have!

So, **NLP** is the main modality I work with, and what is it? NLP stands for Neuro Linguistic Programming. And actually, as I was driving here this morning I was thinking about how NLP has many definitions – it's often described as **the study of excellence**, or rapid change technology. You see, Neuro is about how our mind and body work. Linguistics is language, how we use language consciously and unconsciously and how it influences our experience of the world. And Programming, how patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviour are created, and can therefore be changed.

Now, as I was driving along thinking about all this, I realised I couldn't remember the last 10 minutes of my journey. Has that ever happened to you? Of course, this is our programming, we do it automatically. It's just as automatic as tying our shoe laces or signing our name. And these programmes are running sub-consciously (or unconsciously).

We also have not so good programming, such as:

- Stress
- Sleeping badly
- Nightmares
- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder)
- Panic attacks
- Even nail biting.

NLP is the science behind understanding *how we do these things*. Clients often look intrigued when I ask them if they'd like me to teach them how they're doing their panic attacks!

So what does this have to do with **wellbeing**?

Firstly, **wellbeing is not something we have or don't have, it's something we do.** If you think about it, you couldn't hold wellbeing in your hand, could you? And the same goes for confidence, anxiety, depression or self esteem – you can't hold any of them in the palm of your hand, they're not something you *have*, they're something you *do*, or *not do*.

NLP asks, how do you do that?

For example, we know enough about the patterns of depression now that we can teach people how to do depression (although I don't get a lot of call for this myself!).

But seriously, thanks to world renowned experts on overcoming depression such as Martin Seligman and Dr Michael Yapko, we do understand the patterns of depression – how people typically do it. This means we also know of course, what *other* strategies someone doing depression needs to learn, so they can be well, happy and in control of themselves.

Being **in control** is key here. In my work with clients I'm often very focused on helping them run their own brain. I don't know about you, but I remember as a teenager feeling like whatever I was feeling was just how it was, that it was just happening to me, and I had to just grin and bear it. I thought the best I could do was wait for it to go away. I didn't realise I could choose my thoughts and feelings, which I started to understand more in my later teens and early twenties. It wasn't until my NLP training, however, that I really learned *how* to do this consistently.

Like many of you no doubt, now I know how to do wellbeing.

Now, when it comes to the Winning Ways to Wellbeing, here is a helpful distinction. When someone is running unhelpful strategies such as stress, anxiety or depression, taking these steps can be challenging.

Keep this in mind when you are working with people who may have unhelpful strategies running, as these will potentially be getting in the way of doing the new habits you're teaching them. **Dealing with these underlying unconstructive patterns helps people make changes that are more sustainable.**

Let me give you an example or two.

Dr Yapko's research has helped us identify the various 'patterns' of behaviour that are typical of those experiencing depression. One of these is that people doing depression often don't easily, if at all, connect into positive states (such as happy or excited) and easily connect into negative states and pain such as feeling low, angry or sad.



This creates a challenge when it comes to connecting with nature for example (Take Notice) and noticing a beautiful sunny day.

Another common pattern is negative internal dialogue. Yes, we all talk to ourselves, and it is normal! It's **how we're talking to ourselves that determines our state of mind**. People doing depression will typically be doing negative self talk that loops straight into a negative state. For example, they might say "It's hopeless" and then get a bad feeling, then say "Boy, I'm pathetic" and get another bad feeling, and so on it goes. With this pattern running they are rarely feeling good about themselves and this can make it very challenging to be connecting with others (Connect) and feeling positive about their relationships and spending time with people.

We want to be able to help people create new strategies so that the Winning Ways to Wellbeing are easy to implement and live from.

I was talking earlier about our programming and **this programming runs at the sub-conscious (unconscious) level – where all change learning and behaviours run**. My clients often tell me about how they've been trying really hard to fix their problem, to change their habits, but it hasn't worked. They know what they want/how they want to be, but they don't know *how* to get there. They've been trying at the conscious level to make changes, but that is not where the patterns are stored.

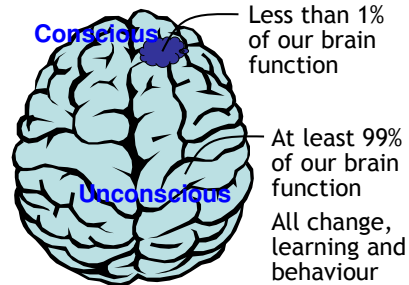
Now, here's the kicker. For sometime now we've known that the conscious mind is much smaller than the sub-conscious mind, and the most recent brain research out of various neuro sciences tells us that the conscious mind is less than 1% of our brain function, and therefore

our sub-conscious mind is at least 99%. Thus, we really want to be able to make changes to this programming.

The distinction here is that **NLP coaching and therapy helps us make changes at that sub-conscious level.**

I hope this has given you some helpful insights into how NLP can help us enhance our wellbeing. You will have a sense I hope of the broad spectrum that NLP plays on, from helping with mild anxiety or sleep problems, right through to severe PTSD, etc. Ultimately, NLP practitioners help people balance themselves mentally, feel emotionally stable and in charge of themselves, so they can be doing wellbeing automatically.

How our brain works: Conscious & Unconscious



Thank you for listening, and you have some information (see website below) about the activities and opportunities for free workshops and coaching we are offering throughout Mental Health Awareness Week. We are very keen to coordinate activities with your organisations, so please do get in touch if you would like more information and to discuss these opportunities further.

NLP Activities during MHAW



The NZANLP and its members will be carrying out a range of activities around the country this year during and around MHAW. Further details are available on www.nzanlp.org.nz.

If your organisation would like the opportunity to collaborate with NLP practitioners in any way during MHAW or would simply like to know more about how NLP can help you, your teams and your consumers, contact us via the website or email info@nzanlp.org.nz. We will be delighted to discuss this with you.

Resources:

Dr Michael Yapko - internationally known expert in the areas of treating depression, strategic short term psychotherapy, and clinical applications of hypnosis.
www.yapko.com

Martin Seligman – world renowned expert on happiness, Seligman is a psychologist and author. A world-renowned authority on depression and abnormal psychology, he is known for his work on the theory of "learned helplessness and is often referred to as the father of positive psychology.
<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/default.aspx>



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Karen Ross | NLP Master Practitioner |
Ph 09 366 0183 | Mob 021 403 408 | www.freshwaysforward.co.nz