

## BOOK REVIEW

# MovieMind: Directing Your Mental Cinemas

By L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

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Reviewed by Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D.

Your brain is like a movie theater, and your mind is like a collection of movie clips that constantly play in that movie theater. Even though you may not know it, you are the actor in those movies, as well as the producer, director, and editor. The quality of those movies determines the quality of your life. "Change those movies, and you transform your emotions, behaviors, and life."

So begins *MovieMind* by L. Michael Hall, an introduction to cognitive psychology and NLP, for people who aren't familiar with NLP, or even psychology, for that matter. It is a self-improvement book, written in friendly, simple, everyday language, about how to manage thoughts and emotions in order to live more effectively and happily.

## Content

It sounds so simple, doesn't it?

Manage your thoughts, and you'll take charge of your life! Yet, why is it so difficult and why do our limitations seem so intractable? It's because most people don't know how to manage their thoughts. They don't have a good working model of the mind, and they don't have the training or the tools. Even the concept of manipulating one's thoughts is alien to some people! Hall sets out to change all that in *MovieMind*.

He uses the metaphor that thoughts are like movies of the mind. We are usually not consciously aware of how we make our mind movies, or that through those movies we represent the world—but we do! We internally reproduce sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and sensations that somehow characterize our individual versions of the world around us—what every experience means and how we should respond. We don't notice all

this because we are so caught up in the content of our movies. To be consciously aware of how we make our movies requires mindfulness--a skill *MovieMind* teaches. To become mindful of our internal movies, we have to become aware of how we display those movies, sequence the events, create the sound tracks, and talk to ourselves about them. Then we can understand how we use those movies to create the mind-body states that permit resourcefulness or limitation.

Hall invites us to think of the human body as a "neuro-linguistic processing system." Our bodies take in sensory-based information and our neurology encodes that information into an internal representation. Next, we transform the information into words to make it mean something. Then our processing results in feelings and behaviors.

While many events fade from memory, others remain. Those that remain are those we "refresh" from time to time. The events we remember most become points of reference for future access, the framework of future meanings and choices.

The leverage to change our movies comes from the ability to alter perspective—to "see" our movies from inside, as the actor, or from outside, as the observer. We can also change the cinematic details, altering the visual or auditory elements. We can play our movies while moving our bodies in various ways. Whatever changes we make will change how we talk to ourselves, the meanings and associations around those movies, our feelings and emotions, and how well we navigate the seas of life. Hall makes the point effectively in *MovieMind*: How we manage our movies determines our health, relationships, skills, and successes.

We have movies about everyday, mundane tasks as well as long-running features about "How Life Is" and "The Story of Reality." We build a unifying structure of frames of reference around our movies that expresses enduring beliefs, values, attitudes, opinions, and identity.

We sometimes store movies of traumatic or terrifying events. They zoom into our consciousness, taking us back to an original horrific experience. WHOOSH! We get the same feelings all over again whether we want to or not (think phobia, anxiety attack, or post-traumatic stress here). It happens so fast and the images are so fleeting, it seems impossible to control (let alone change or understand), until we go to a higher level, a meta-level of consciousness to examine and discuss objectively, our thoughts—our movies. In fact, we can change all those movies that give us negative states.

That's right! Hall tells us we can step out of our movies, casting off the role of actor and take the role of director or editor. We can make any changes we want. At the cinematic level, we can change the visual and auditory details, speed the movie up, slow it down, or play it backwards. We can even refute the meaning of the movie, if we want. We can talk to our younger selves in those movies and teach them things they didn't know. In *MovieMind*, Hall gives his readers many options for improving their movies. Hall even describes how to program "training films" into our mind-body systems so that we have new competencies and skills.

Hall gives a checklist for quality controlling our movies so they give us optimum resourcefulness. Why would anyone watch sick and disgusting mind movies if they don't have to? Because they think that their movies are "the way things really are," and by running those kinds of movies over and over they will finally come to grips with "reality" and then things will get better. Not so, says Hall. The more appropriate response is to detach from our movies and simply see them as mental phenomena that may or may not serve our needs. By operating at this higher level of consciousness, we see that we can make things better and accomplish a higher good by getting control over thoughts and feelings.

Hall gives a reminder that if you want to produce a really great movie of your life, mere cinematography is not enough. It takes a terrific screenplay! So ask yourself: What is the general narrative of your life? What are your dominant themes and patterns? Is it a movie you would pay to see? Is it a story that makes you stand up and cheer, or is it dreary, depressing,

and lacking in plot, character, and substance? You decide. It's your mind, and what you do with it is up to you!

## Conclusion

With *MovieMind*, L. Michael Hall has produced an easy-to-read, easy-to-understand introduction to NLP and Neuro-Semantics (NS). NLP Practitioners should recommend this book to their clients who want a keener comprehension of what NLP change processes are all about. *MovieMind* is good book for turning NLP clients into knowledgeable consumers. For readers who want more information about NLP and NS, Hall rightly includes a chapter about the origins of NLP and NS, a glossary, a bibliography, and a list of his training programs.

If I could recommend one addition to this engaging book, it would be to advise readers that they can learn even more about NLP and advance their progress with the help of an NLP Practitioner. I would explain what NLP Practitioners know, what they do, and where to find them. An NLP Practitioner can guide novices through NLP change processes, while managing the subtle aspects

of ecology, parts, presuppositions, and Meta-Domains that a beginner may not consider or understand.

Hall's book makes a contribution to the field in that it wets a beginner's appetite for NLP, while avoiding academic theories and jargon. The parallel between mind and movie is one that even children can grasp, and Hall makes superb use of the analogy in a fun, lighthearted way!

Judith E. Pearson, Ph.D., is a Licensed Professional Counselor with a solo practice in Springfield, Virginia. She is a manager with an international consulting firm, and a freelance writer/editor. She is a certified NLP Practitioner /Trainer and an Associate Trainer with the American Hypnosis Training Academy, and the Mid-Lantic Institute of NLP, as well as Executive Director for the National Board of Certified Clinical Hypnotherapists.