

BOOK REVIEW

The NLP Coach

A Comprehensive Guide to Personal Well-Being and Professional Success

By Ian McDermott and Wendy Jago

Reviewed by Suzi Smith

The subtitle of this book, published by Piatkus Publishers of London in 2001, says much about the content of the book. I know that some people who purchased the book thinking that it would be a guide to coaching said that the content was a surprise to them. As written, it turns out that this is really a guide to self-coaching using the many tools that NLP has to offer. The authors do a wonderful job of demonstrating how the incredibly powerful techniques and concepts known as NLP can help you achieve success in any environment of your choice. Coaching is a buzzword in our society today and many people are wanting to learn how they can obtain the skills to help them become a coach and jump on this very popular bandwagon. Rather than teaching you the specific tools necessary to become a coach to others, this book will teach you how to coach yourself. Of course, by implementing the powerful processes in this book, you will be learning elements that are useful in coaching others.

In the Introduction section, the authors explain how they have designed the book to facilitate this self-coaching. Their intention is to prompt

productive internal conversations by asking you questions that get you thinking, just as a coach would. At times in the book, they recommend that you set aside time to examine some incident from your own experience to glean the learning from it. I found the exercises and questions in the book very thought-provoking, allowing me to drill down deeper into the issue I was considering at the time.

The NLP Coach is divided into five parts, each very different from the other. This review will point out several of the jewels that stood out for me as I went through the book. The book is 359 pages, so please bear in mind that this review cannot possibly pay justice to all that will be available to you when you read the book and actually engage in the exercises and questions in an in depth way.

Part I - Coaching and NLP

McDermott and Jago start right out by pointing out what NLP is and how it is like coaching in many ways. The pioneers of NLP noticed the

value of awareness and being able to establish exactly how someone did something. They called this process modeling, and used modeling to establish the very roots of NLP. This book helps you to focus on self-modelling the problems you find yourself repeating—any event that repeats must involve some repeated processes or sequences, and self-modelling can help unearth them. Coaching also helps you explore yourself and find out how you go about things, to discover your strengths and how to work on your limitations.

Here are some of the characteristics that NLP and coaching share. Both are outcome-focused; customized to your needs and your aims; non-judgemental; supportive; based on the assumptions you have all the resources you need; keep to your own agenda; work in a curiosity frame; help break down larger, longer-term goals into smaller, shorter-term achievable steps; increase your awareness of what's happening here-and-now; assume that change can be cumulative; and assume that everyone can engage in lifelong learning, provided they want to work

with processes and structure rather than content. Reading this list of shared characteristics it becomes obvious that NLP and coaching are meant for each other.

Part II - NLP Coaching Tools

This section of the book focuses on some of the basic NLP tools that are useful to you in the coaching process. In the Introduction to this part of the book the authors emphasize a phrase: "What NLP and coaching have in common is: less is more." Using the tools in NLP that we know work so well will assist you in getting what you want in the most economical and effective way.

There are 24 different NLP tools described in this section, including the essential basics of NLP like anchoring, well formed outcomes, perceptual positions, meta programs, reframing, Disney's creativity strategy, and chunking, to mention just a few. Most mentioned are presented as processes and ways of thinking rather than full NLP techniques. For each tool, they give the following information:

1. What it is.
2. What it does.
3. Some everyday examples of it in use.
4. Situations which could prompt you to use it.
5. How you can use it.

This useful part of the book serves students of NLP well as they begin exploring the basic processes and how to use them.

This is where we are first introduced to logical levels, with one

suggestion being that you can use them to help you understand situations that seem puzzling, figuring out just what the issue is that you are confronted with and which logical level is involved. The authors revisit logical levels in several other places in the book, pointing out how useful this exploration can be.

Part III - Success and Failure

The point is made in the Introduction to this section that your beliefs about success and failure could even predetermine your progress without your even being aware of it. Your beliefs and language are one significant way in which you limit yourself. The

word "failure" is particularly loaded and brings about feelings of sadness, despondency, and loss of self-esteem. When you don't get what you wanted, which is sometimes used as a definition for failure, you can look for the learning in the experience, explore other options that might have been possible, and clarify how you might behave differently in the future.

The authors offer that important reframe that NLP offers to failure: failure is really only feedback. Given that, you can become very curious and examine the feedback for clues. Questions you can ask are: How exactly did I do that? What exactly did I do that didn't work? When did I do this—is the timing important? Where

did I do this—is the location significant here? Just reading these questions flashed me back on times when my attempts at communication had “failed miserably.” I quickly realized that the time and place were huge factors in the results I produced. Valuable information indeed.

There are several suggestions for how to use feedback constructively.

1. Take notice of feedback in all its forms.
2. If what you're doing isn't working, do something different.
3. If what you're doing is working get clear about what it is that's working so you can do more of it.
4. Pay attention to detail.
5. Model yourself and others.

Once you've learned to analyze what might be called “failure,” you can of course, use those same processes to look at success. In addition to what is suggested above you can also use contrastive analysis to find the difference that makes the difference; notice the sequences that work well; pay attention to observable behavior as well as internal representations; and break your goals into small, achievable steps.

Part IV - Your Five Dimensions of Success

The Introduction to this section includes the following quote from the authors; “In this section we will show you how to use NLP to examine the raw material available to you—namely, yourself and your life.

We shall also be coaching you on the five dimensions—your potential, style, personal balance, world and, of course, yourself—that in our experience are most crucial for achieving your goals.” The premise is that understanding these five dimensions and how they impact you can help you identify what to change and what resources will help you do it.

Examining your potential and your style includes an in-depth look at well-formed outcomes and meta outcomes and utilizing likes and dislikes, modeling, and meta programs. To me, the real meat in this section is in the introduction of **The Wheel of Life**. This wheel is designed to have you rank 8 different areas of your life as to your satisfaction in each of these areas. The areas for consideration are career, finances, health, friends and family, love and romance, personal development, fun and recreation, and physical environment. Once you have ranked these areas you can ask these questions:

1. What do I want?
2. What do I really want?
3. What am I not paying attention to or honoring?
4. What's the easiest step I can take now?
5. How will I begin taking action and checking back regularly?

I have personally found this Wheel of Life approach a valuable way to constantly assess my life and come back into balance.

The chapter on the world has an exercise giving you the opportunity to explore how you've been creating your world. The exercise has you consider an event that didn't turn out as you expected from the point

of view of the different systems involved. You ask how these different systems interacted and affected each other and how might you respond differently in the future were it to occur again?

The chapter on yourself asks you to consider how much you invest in yourself in the following ways: time on your own; relaxation; new stimuli; presents and treats; fun; off-duty activities; doing things you like; being with people who make you feel good; praising yourself; appreciating your uniqueness; spending money on yourself in ways that enhance your life, your skills, your opportunities; and honoring your needs. This list gave me food for thought in my daily journaling and I have started an active program of investing more in myself consciously and with mindfulness. I love the results it's bringing.

Part V - Success Secrets

This last section of the book comprises over 200 pages and a wealth of information covering self-esteem; building good relationships; maximizing your brain power; health, wealth, and happiness; making work rewarding; and being spiritually alive. A chapter is devoted to each of these areas showing you the many ways that NLP can assist you in making changes for the better—as well as revealing your existing recipes for success so that you can duplicate them as often as you wish. Each area covered includes four “how to's” to increase your success in that area and numerous tips and exercises for enhancement. Like

the rest of the book, there are also many stories about people the authors have worked with, helping them to illustrate a point.

Self-esteem is defined as the value we put on ourselves. People with high self-esteem have a strong sense of self; they like themselves; they can recognize and manage their internal state; and they have a clear sense of purpose. There are many useful tips offered in how to develop these qualities along with exercises to give you experience with the concepts. Try this simple exercise. Make two lists. One that begins "I like myself because..." and the other that begins "I like... about myself." This can be a beginning step to liking yourself better.

In the chapter on building good relationships, another four "how to's" are explored.

- How to build a 'we' which goes beyond 'me' and 'you.'
- How to see things from different points of view—the skill of taking different perceptual positions.
- How to invest in the future.
- How to know when to stop investing and pull out.

Critical to relationships is a good sense of self and being true to yourself. It's important to know what you want and be prepared to ask for it. Having a clear sense of your own boundaries is essential along with knowing how to move cleanly between different perceptual positions. The more attentive you can be to feedback without regarding it judgementally, the better you will be able to respond to another in a relationship. And remember to be explicit about what you

want, feel, or think to avoid assumptions. These are just a few of the things to consider to improve your relationships. Along with these considerations are many helpful tips ranging from how to create a sense of "we," to how to get the best value from your investment in a relationship, to how to know what to do when things aren't right, to finding the right time to bring up an issue. The many questions you can ask yourself are very thought provoking.

The chapter on maximizing your brain power focuses on the many ways that you can keep your brain in good working condition. The four ways that you can boost your brain power are:

1. Making the most of what

you've got.

2. Being more creative.
3. Accelerating your learning.
4. Improving your memory.

Think about becoming immensely curious about how you work and taking the opportunity to examine your self-limiting beliefs about learning and using your brain. Once you've done that, you can build your mental versatility through using your representation systems, submodalities and meta programs more fully. There are numerous exercises, like what are called brain push-ups that can help you access outside of your typical way of thinking. Creativity, learning states, and finding triggers to enhance memory are also dealt with here. The essence for me of this chapter was

about using and more fully developing my senses in a creative way while remaining open to new options.

For most, people, health, wealth and happiness are synonymous with the good life. The chapter devoted to these areas presents the notion of conserving versus preserving. Conserving is described as an active process where you attend to and promote what has value to you. In these three areas conserving would be noticing what you are already doing or already have and taking good care of yourself and your assets now and for your future—and this isn't just financial. It's about knowing what you've got and keeping track of how you're doing. To assist you in this, the authors have created questions to ask yourself to assess where you are currently in these areas. They even help

you define health, wealth and happiness for yourself.

In the health section, there is discussion of some of the obvious lifestyle factors that impact health, such as stress, rest, food and drink, exercise, and sleep. They include tips for taking care of yourself, dismantling stress, how to be more healthy, and ways to conserve your health. I always appreciate being reminded about what works in that domain.

Regarding wealth, the suggestion is made that you consistently save and invest over time, taking into account your expenses and your future needs. Meta programs are mentioned here again in this chapter, focusing on the value of considering this through time and planning for your future. It's helpful to ask yourself on a regular basis

about the meta outcome of having money. That helps put everything into perspective.

There is much variety in the way people define happiness. It is typically thought of as a highly individual state, a complex combination of physiological, mental, and emotional elements. Happiness doesn't have to be dependent on external events or things; and we all know how helpful NLP is in changing our internal experience. It's worth examining the everyday, complex state called happiness so that you can actively create and manage it.

The chapter on making work rewarding helps you examine how you think of work. Is it challenging and exciting, just a means of paying the bills, or something that you begrudge doing because it takes up too much of your time and your life? Meta programs are useful here again in helping you determine if the work you are doing is suited to your individual style and preferences. Of course, you can utilize the skills of managing yourself and your state as you're working to make everything go smoother. This section has a useful piece on how to manage and influence others for those people who have that as a part of their work.

The final chapter is on being spiritually alive. Since the logical levels have been woven throughout the book, it is appropriate to end here. Spirituality doesn't have to relate to religious affiliation. It's a sense of something that includes yet goes beyond you. There's a link between the events that happen on a daily basis and a wider meaning, and there's coherence at a

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really high level. The authors offer these four pointers to being spiritually alive.

1. Stop trying.
2. Be present.
3. Create a more spacious awareness.
4. Allow an attitude of gratitude.

I have an attitude of gratitude for Ian McDermott and Wendy Jago for putting all of these ideas together in one place. The suggestions, questions and tips in this book have enabled me to become a better coach for myself. No surprise also that I find myself using these questions with the people that I am coaching also. If you're interested in your own self-development, this book is a necessary addition to your book collection.

About the Authors

Ian McDermott is a leading trainer, consultant, and author in the field of NLP and coaching. He is the Director of Training for International Teaching Seminars located in London and has trained thousands of people over the past fifteen years, using the NLP processes in this book. He is active as a business consultant and coach, also working with the public sector and the BBC. He is the co-author of ten books on NLP and numerous audio tapes.

Wendy Jago is a practicing consultant, coach, and therapist. She has a Diploma in Hypnosis and Psychotherapy and is a Master Practitioner

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Suzi Smith, co-founder of the Anchor Point Institute and Anchor Point Productions has been training in NLP programs world-wide since 1985. She has an active one-on-one practice, assisting people through NLP, shamanic energetic healing and telephone coaching. She can be reached at suzi3@mindspring.com

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