BEYOND THE EDGE
PEAK PERFORMANCE – WHEN TOO MUCH ADRENALIN IS NOT ENOUGH

intelligent inspiration
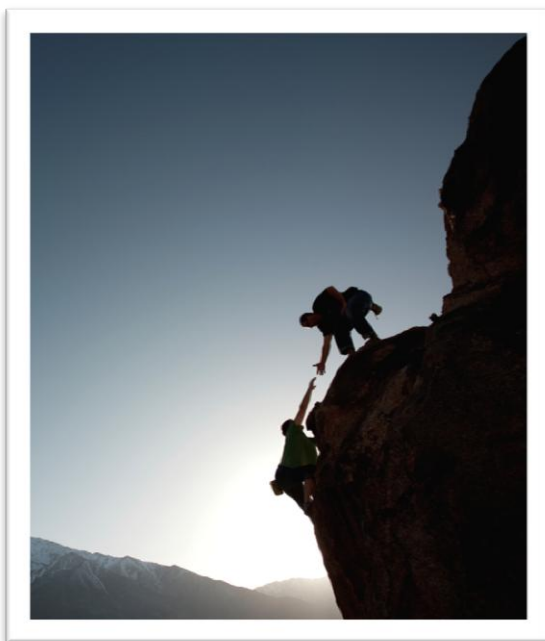
THE AIR WAS ELECTRIC, THE COMPETITORS WERE AT THE POINT OF FRENZY AND THE SPECTATORS COULD TASTE IT. The British National Kendo Championships brings out the most spectacular competitors in this demanding sport. Round one of this sudden death competition began, Greg Nicholas, the captain of the British Team in this year's world championships, strode out against his opponent and ventured back just as quickly suffering an unbelievable defeat at the hands of a young, unknown hungry competitor. How could this happen? In Greg's own words, "Mate, I was flat out there."

Dealing with the 'why's' and 'how's' of this type of result has been up until now one of the most elusive topics in sport today. Regardless of the discipline, whether it be golf, athletics or Kendo, competitors have flat spots in performances when they should be peaking. So what can make the difference in establishing a consistency in performance ability? Neuro Linguistic Programming or NLP for short.

> *"In each of us are heroes;*
> *Speak to them and*
> *they will come forth."*
> *Anonymous*

Some people in sport seem to be "natural performers". Not only do they always manage win, but they go beyond the targets everyone else works towards. In fact, most teams wish they had a few more performers who could generate the same 'mastery', as the top performers do. For instance, "What would happen if a sporting team had another twelve players who emulated the same successful performances as the 'top three'?"

The answer to the above question revolves around how the technology of NLP can significantly improve individual and team performance.

NLP is a programme and method to model human excellence. It embodies an innovative combination of many disciplines, within a creative new relationship. It has produced an entirely new way to enable people to achieve higher levels of expertise, faster. It identifies patterns of excellence and projects those desirable patterns for others to emulate and replicate through a structured training process. The patterns identified by NLP techniques are the set of beliefs, values, internal mental processes and physical activities that characterise certain skills. These patterns are shaped into a model that is used to transfer to athletes those behavioural difference's that make certain people more effective than others, yet with similar training and backgrounds.

Human thinking-processes are complex and highly individualistic. All human beings absorb information and experience through their five senses. Each individual, however, attends to differing components of experience differently, and organises it differently, depending on how they have arranged their internal world. This is why each individual has a unique perception of the world and the unique subjective reality.

NLP pays particular attention to this internal processing, their visual imagery, auditory experience, tactile sensations, their values, beliefs and attitudes. This gives NLP the ability to identify needs more specifically, to derive high performance skills more accurately and to be able to deliver effective coaching and athlete enhancement more surely.

NLP identifies high performance elements/characteristics within the athlete, models it and then codes them. It identifies the key factors of their high performance. It identifies the need structure within outstanding performance. It then projects those patterns of excellence for the athlete to replicate on a consistent basis.

NLP works because it deals with several critical variables not usually incorporated in the sporting world.

It takes into account not only the specific changes required, but also the context into which the changes occur, the values, beliefs, attitudes, history, information processing patterns and the use of language.

It focuses on process as well as the content. That means it is equally concerned with how one acts or thinks, as well as what one thinks or does.
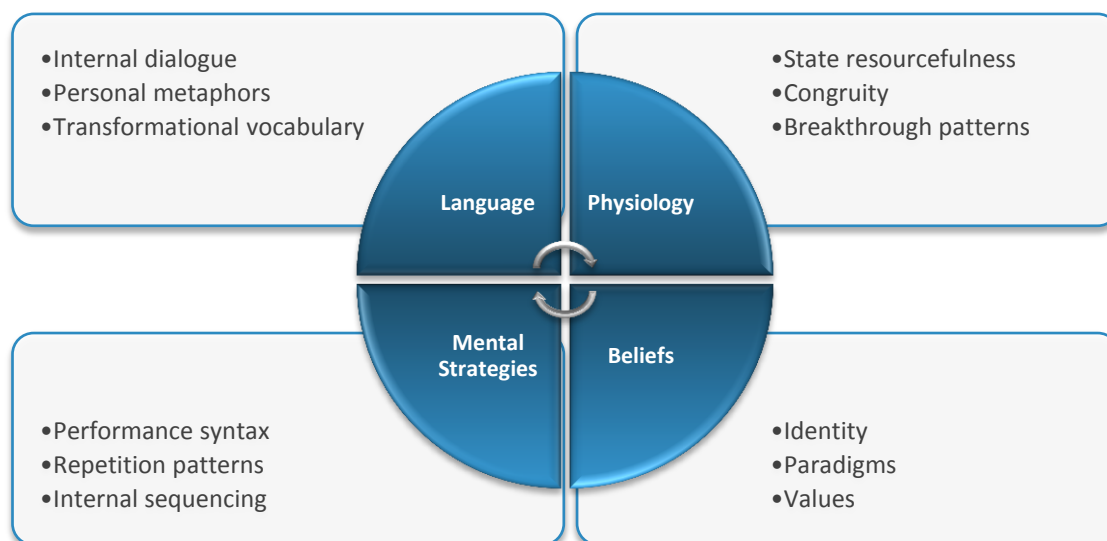
The patterns identified by NLP are then synthesised into a model that is used to enhance the performance of the athletes.

HOW IT WORKS

Just as every telephone has a specific code or number, so every person has a unique behavioural code. Through a straightforward, though sophisticated process of profiling, observing and interacting with high performers, NLP identifies and de-codes the high-performers' (often) out-of-awareness patterns and behaviours.

It primarily concentrates on four key variables, each of which are present in high performers, and generally unrecognised by most coaches in their contextual field.

These are:

- •Internal dialogue
- •Personal metaphors
- •Transformational vocabulary

Language

- •State resourcefulness
- •Congruity
- •Breakthrough patterns

Physiology

Mental Strategies

Beliefs

- •Performance syntax
- •Repetition patterns
- •Internal sequencing

- •Identity
- •Paradigms
- •Values

LANGUAGE

The quality of your language both internal and external has a dramatic affect on your nervous system and therefore your ability to perform. We all know it but rarely control it and use it positively. For instance, if you say any of the following:

> *"I'm too up tight about today's competition"*
>
> *"They look in better shape than us"*
>
> *"That's the ref that hates us"*

How does that affect your ability to start from the best possible position or state? It doesn't!

You must talk to yourself and others in a way that's positive and in an empowering tone.

PHYSIOLOGY

The way you move your body directly determines the quality of your emotional state and quite probably, your internal focus. Look at depressed people – you can spot them a mile off. Their whole physiology speaks louder than words. You can also spot people who are 'on fire', again it is because of the way they move the physiology. If you are being psyched out before an event just do this… move your body about and up your physiological tempo. It'll change your state immediately.

Experts are able to put themselves in the best mental and physical posture that not only support the activity involved, but also helps to focus the expert's attention, and keeps them free from stress. This is part of the reason that an expert can maintain the high intensity and parcels of time involved to acquire a high-level skill. NLP models the finest high-performance state, for the task in hand.

These modelling patterns are then coded installed and replicated systematically. They can be transferred to others through a unique, powerful, reinforcing learning-process (Neural Patterning) that in a surprisingly short time, installs these modelled patterns in the individuals who want them. This can be done for an individual or a group.

BELIEFS

Whether you believe you can or you believe you can't, you're probably right… so the old saying goes. I've known so many athletes who have buckets of potential and capability but they just didn't master the toughest sale of all – on themselves. You've got to sell yourself to yourself, that you are capable, you do deserve to win, that you can beat your competition. Without that belief you may as well leave your kit in your car and take a seat in the grandstand.

The level of performance that an individual can achieve has much to do with the set of beliefs and attitudes they have in relation to the task in hand. Even fairly-physical tasks involving strength or co-ordination are surprisingly dependant on the person's mental set. NLP is able to establish the enabling beliefs that drive an expert behaviour; any limiting beliefs can be identified and changed.

MENTAL STRATEGIES

The door to expertise cannot be through blind repetition of random activities. Instead it is through rehearsal and mastery of the specific mental syntax that the expert uses. This mental syntax is usually unknown to the expert, who is often the least likely to perceive it. NLP elicits these out-of-awareness sequences, and can install them using Neural Patterning (NP). These are the keys to motivation. NLP also identifies the primary motivational strategies that maintain an expert's superior performance, and install similar values in the target athletes.

> A Zulu grandfather was speaking with his grandson…
>
> GRANDFATHER: *Life is like I have two lions in my heart. One is a courageous beast, the other is a cowardly lion.*
> GRANDSON: *Which one will win Grandfather?*
> GRANDFATHER: *The one that I feed.."*

Keep smiling,

Brad