For readers who are new, the Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox series is an ongoing series focused on using Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in our practice of amicable dispute resolution.

The first entry in this series looked at the NLP Communication Model. It is recommended that you read the entry on the NLP Communication Model before reading this entry.

By any of a brief way, miscommunication can occur because our experience of our external environment is filtered by our neurology such that the resulting internal representations of our memories and experiences become a shadow of reality. It is filtered anew age when we seek words to describe our internal representations, our words becoming a shadow of a shadow of reality. These filters essentially distort, generalize and delete our experience of the world.

These processes of distortion, generalization and deletion are vital in that they allow us to manage and cope with the large amount of data that bombards our senses at any one point. They also allow us to create and share. For example, recognition and identity is a function of our being able to distort reality in a way that we can and consider “What if?” Generalization allows us to move from one world/education and be able to apply it in other contexts.

Additionally, these processes can also have negative effects. For example, generalization may cause us to take an instance of someone’s every utterance and treat it to conclude that person in an unending way. And when that person displays caring behavior, attribution causes us to change the meaning of that behavior into something that reflects our generalization; thereby, attribution also allows us to ignore behavioral and informational that do not match our generalizations. In this way, these filtering processes can also limit the richness of our experiences and trap us in unhelpful mindsets.

Having said that, what follows are the first of three Meta-Model linguistic patterns that mediators may find helpful in working with parties and parties to move towards agreement.

Meta-Model, of course, stems from the use of asking statements adjusted persons’ subjective realities. It is a tool to move them closer to agreement. The NLP Meta Model provides mediators an anchor in their field that they can use.

It is this and the next entry, I shall show some of these Meta-Model patterns and the questions we can ask to shift these realities. Before doing so, I must introduce a metaphor when using the Meta-Model.

First, the Meta-Model is not a magic trick. Do not expect a single question to make a complete shift in the speaker’s mind. It is like a facilitator. It can sometimes make a significant shift or you may need to string a number of interventions together to achieve the shift in subjective realities.

Secondly, using these questions can sometimes be challenging as it causes the listener to question their subjective reality. It is therefore vital to maintain respect with the parties and allow shifting of ideas by “Help me understand how…”, “I’m the guy/doesn’t always have to agree and you ask…”

Having said that, what follows are the first of three Meta-Model linguistic patterns that mediators may find helpful in working with parties and parties to move closer to agreement.

The first Meta-Model linguistic pattern is known as a mind-read. This is where the party makes a statement that parties may have low know what the other party is thinking or feeling.

An example would be “He doesn’t care about the company.” Many mediators will generally accept this statement and seek to gather more facts. Some might seek to challenge with “He says he cares and I know what he means by that.”

The NLP Meta Model response is to find out evidence for that statement by asking “He how does he know he doesn’t care?” Asking the speaker directly the question makes them think. It is easier for them to suddenly, one of the counter-arguments that this is an attribute of behavior. In part of the statement, the speaker is not truly in an ideal situation. The question will get the speaker to acknowledge subjective attitudes and became more aware of others.

The third Meta Model linguistic statement is a connecting statement. It allows the speaker not to be subjectively centered. For example “I know you have a better reason because comes home late every day.”

The NLP Meta Model response is to question the connection between A and B. The mediator might ask “What does coming home late mean to you A better?”

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A Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox – Language: The Hierarchy of Ideas

The first section focused on rapport (the first of which can be found here). This second section features a number of self-care and personal improvement for mediators (the first of which can be found here).

This third section focuses on the use of language in amicable dispute resolution. For ease of reference and the convenience of readers, I shall list in this and subsequent entries the series of entries in this section.

1. A Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox – Language: The NLP Communication Model


3. A Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox – Language: The Meta-Model (Part 2)

Please refer to this post as:

National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law

A Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox – Language: The Meta-Model (Part 1) [here]

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A Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox – Language: The Hierarchy of Ideas [here]

A Neuro-Linguist’s Toolbox – Language: The NLP Communication Model [here]