

# **Time Line Therapy and The Basis of Personality**

**By Tad James  
and Wyatt Woodsmall**



**Crown House Publishing Limited**  
[www.crownhouse.co.uk](http://www.crownhouse.co.uk)

First published in 1988 by Meta Publications  
(paperback ISBN 978-091699021-3)

This edition published by  
Crown House Publishing Ltd  
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK  
[www.crownhouse.co.uk](http://www.crownhouse.co.uk)

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC  
PO Box 2223, Williston, VT 05495, USA  
[www.crownhousepublishing.com](http://www.crownhousepublishing.com)

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British Library of Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available  
from the British Library.

Print ISBN 978-178583283-3  
Mobi ISBN 978-178583284-0  
ePub ISBN 978-178583285-7  
ePDF ISBN 97-178583286-4

LCCN 2017954070

Printed and bound in the UK by  
Gomer Press, Llandysul, Ceredigion

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**WARNING:** The techniques described in this book are extremely powerful, and have the possibility of changing a person's personality totally and completely in a very short period of time. It is therefore important, for your safety and the safety of your client, that any therapeutic use of these techniques be done by someone trained in Time Line Therapy™. For training in Time Line Therapy in your area, contact: Tad James, ProfitAbility Group, Inc., P.O. Box 3768, Honolulu, HI 96812.

# Introduction

We are at the beginning of a new era of understanding. Over time, as we worked with a number of clients, it became obvious that we had discovered elements that make up a person's personality. We tested and found that, as we used this model for change, we were able to create seemingly miraculous changes in individuals, and at the deepest level of personality.

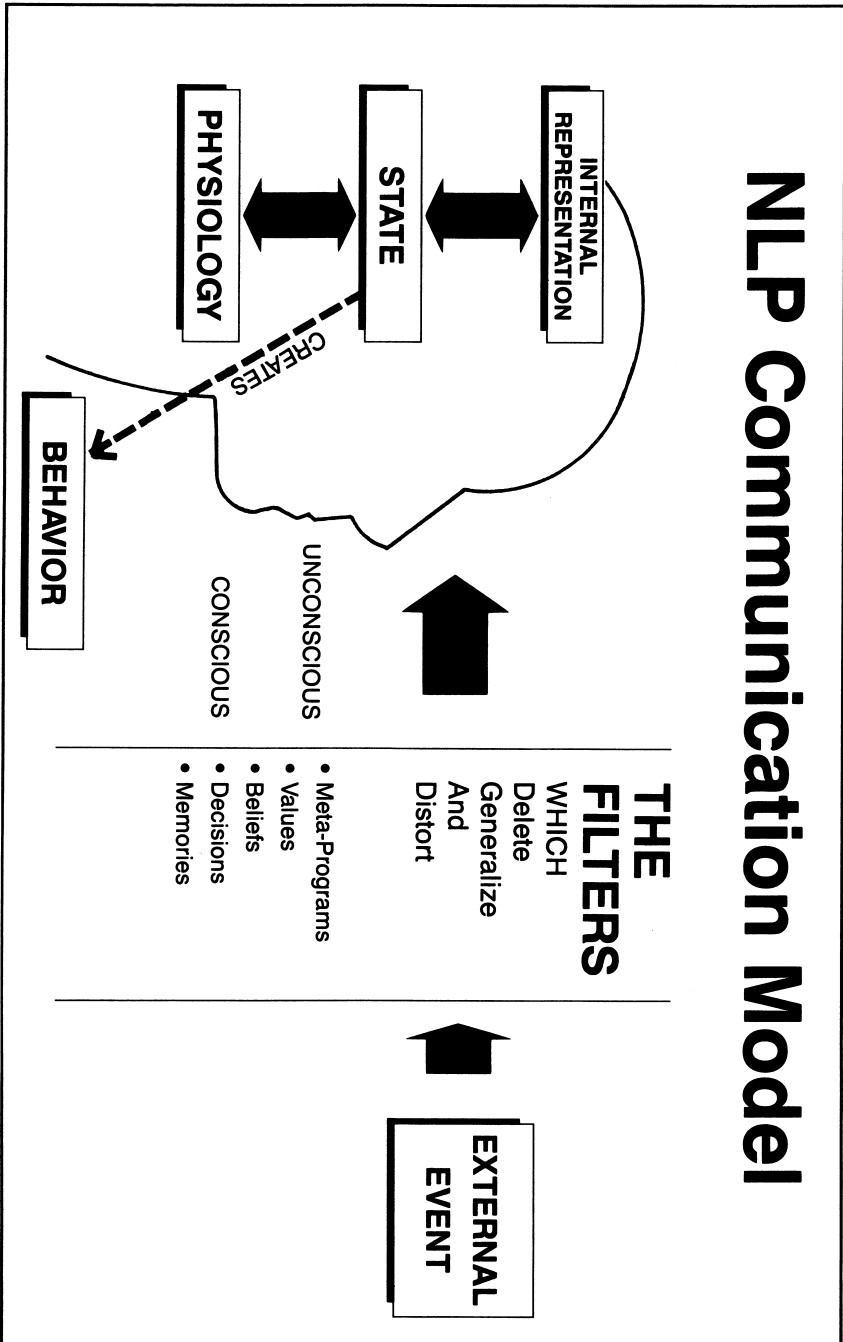
Models are interesting devices. They are descriptions or simulations of how something works in a certain area. In essence a model is a blueprint or a map. Like a map, a model is not necessarily "true." It is just a representation of reality. So we are not necessarily looking for truth in making this model; we are only attempting to describe how the human personality works. Like a map, it is only a description; and the value of any map or blueprint is in the result that you can produce by using it.

Our model seems to be a major discovery. This is a discovery for which psychologists from Freud and Jung to Isabel Briggs Myers have been searching. This model has the potential to change human understanding for all time to come, for we now understand and can change the basic elements that make up a person's personality. We now know the basis of personality and how to change it.

The model that we are calling the Basis of Personality is based on another earlier model, which is one of how we communicate with ourselves and with others. This model, which is essentially a model from Cognitive Psychology, was developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder. It is called Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), and it explains how we process the information that comes into us from the world around us.

As we look at the NLP model, the process begins with an external event that we experience through our senses. Our

# NLP Communication Model



cognition of the event occurs as we experience the information that comes in through our sensory input channels which are:

**Visual** including what we see or the way someone looks at us;

**Auditory** which includes sounds, the words we hear and the way that people say those words to us;

**Kinesthetic** or external feelings, which include the touch of someone or something, the pressure and the texture;

**Olfactory** which is smell; and

**Gustatory** which is taste.

After the external event comes in through our sensory input channels, and before we make an Internal Representation (IR) of the event, we filter the event. We run that event through our internal processing filters. Our internal processing filters are how we delete, distort and generalize the information that comes in through our five senses.

## DELETION

Deletion occurs when we selectively pay attention to certain aspects of our experience and not others. Deletion means we overlook or omit certain sensory information. Without deletion, we would be faced with much too much information to handle in our conscious minds.

## DISTORTION

Distortion occurs when we make shifts in our experience of sensory data by making misrepresentations of reality. There's a well known story of distortion in Eastern philosophy. It is called the story of the rope and the snake. A man walking along a road saw what he believed to be a snake and yelled, "SNAKE." However, upon closer investigation he is relieved to discover that it really was only a piece of rope.

Distortion also helps us in the process of motivating ourselves. Motivation occurs when we actually distort the material that has come to us and that has already been changed by one of our filtering systems. Distortion is also helpful in planning. We distort to plan when we construct imaginary futures.



## GENERALIZATION

The third process is generalization, where we draw global conclusions based on one, two or more experiences. At its best, generalization is one of the ways that we learn, whereby we take the information we have and draw broad conclusions about the world based on one or more experiences. At its worst, generalization is how we take a single event and make it into a lifetime of experience.

Normally the conscious mind can only handle seven, plus or minus two, items of information at any given time. Of course, many people cannot even handle this number. And I know people who have trouble with “one, plus or minus two”—the kind of people who cannot walk and chew gum. How about you? Try this: Can you name more than seven products in a given product category: for example, cigarettes? Most people will be able to name two, maybe three products in a category of low interest, and usually no more than nine in a category of high interest. There is a reason for this. If we did not actively delete information all the time, we would end up with excessive amounts of information coming in. In fact, you may have even heard that psychologists say that if we were simultaneously aware of all of the sensory information that was coming in, we would go crazy. That is why we filter the information.

So the question is, “When two people have the same stimulus, why don’t they have the same response?” The answer is: because we delete, distort, and generalize the information from the outside in different ways.\*

We delete, distort and generalize the information that comes in from our senses by using certain internal processing filters. The filters are: Meta Programs, Values, Beliefs, Attitudes, Decisions and Memories.

## META PROGRAMS

Meta Programs are the most unconscious of the internal processing filters, and they are content-free filters. That is to say that Meta Programs in and of themselves have no content, but they do filter the content of our experience. Meta Programs are

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\*For ways of recognizing deletions, distortions and generalizations, and restoring them, see *Structure of Magic I*, Bandler, R.; et al.; 1975 Meta Publications

deletion and distortion filters that either add to or subtract from our generalizations. Meta Programs are just one of the ways we maintain our identities by either preserving or breaking down the generalizations that we make over time. Since knowing someone's Meta Programs can actually help you closely predict his states, they can be used to predict behavior—their actions. In addition, we can change the ways a person filters information for a certain purpose. The purpose of Meta Programs is NOT to put people into boxes (which we resist), or for the purpose of determining right or wrong. Meta Programs are not good or bad. They are simply one way a person processes information.

## VALUES

The next most unconscious filter is our values. Values are the first level where the filters have content in and of themselves and are essentially an evaluation filter. They are how we decide whether our actions are good or bad or right or wrong. Values are how we decide about how we feel about our actions, and they provide the primary motivating force behind our actions. Values are arranged in a hierarchy, with the most important one typically being at the top and lesser ones below that. Each of us has varying models of the world (an internal representation of how the world is), and our values are interrelated with our models of the world. When we communicate with ourselves or someone else, if our model of the world conflicts with our values or their values, there is likely to be a conflict. Richard Bandler says, "Values are those things we don't live up to." Values are those ideas in which we are willing to invest time, energy and resources to either achieve or avoid.

Values are what people typically move toward or away from (see Meta Programs). They are our attractions or repulsions in life. They are generalizations about deep belief systems, which can be either unconscious or conscious, about what is important and what we evaluate as good or bad. Values can change with context. That is, you probably have certain values about what you want in a relationship and what you want in business, and they are probably not the same. Your values about what you want

in one or in the other may be quite different. (Actually, if they're not, it's possible that you may have trouble with both.) Since values are context related they can also be state related, although values are definitely less related to state than are beliefs.

## **BELIEFS**

The next level of filters are beliefs. Beliefs are convictions or acceptances that certain things are true or real. They are also generalizations about the state of the world. One of the more important elements in Modeling (which is an NLP process for recreating excellence; see Glossary) is to find a person's beliefs about the particular behavior we are trying to model. Richard Bandler says, "Beliefs are those things we can't get around." Beliefs are the presuppositions that we have about certain things that either create or deny personal power for us. At this level beliefs are essentially our on/off switches for our ability to do anything in the world, because if you don't believe you can do something, you probably won't have the opportunity to find out. In the process of working with someone's beliefs it is important to elicit or find out what beliefs he has that causes him to be able to do what he does. We also want to find out the disabling beliefs, the ones that do not allow them to do what they want to do.

## **ATTITUDES**

Attitudes are collections of values and belief systems around a certain subject. We are usually quite conscious of our attitudes, and often tell people, "Well, that's just the way I feel about that." Change made on the level of attitude is often substantially harder than the level of values. (Have you ever tried to change someone's attitude?) It is far easier to change values than attitudes because of the level of abstraction.

## **MEMORIES**

The fifth filter is our collection of memories. Memories deeply affect a person's perceptions and personality. They are who we

are. In fact, some psychologists believe that as we get older our reactions in the present are reactions to gestalts (collections of memories that are organized in a certain way around a certain subject) of past memories and that the present plays very little part in our behavior.

## DECISIONS

The sixth filter, which is also related to memories, are decisions that were made in the past. Decisions about who we are, especially limiting decisions, can affect our entire life. Decisions may create beliefs, values, attitudes and even life themes, or they may just affect our perceptions through time. The problem with many decisions is that they were made either unconsciously or at a very early age and forgotten. Also, we may decide at one point in time and then not re-evaluate our decisions as we grow and our values change. Those decisions that are not re-evaluated (especially the limiting ones) often affect our life in ways that we had not originally intended.

Decisions and memories vary throughout the range of conscious and unconscious. Individual decisions and memories may be found to be more or less conscious than certain values, beliefs and attitudes.

These six filters, then, determine what information is retained as we make an IR of any event. It is our IR that causes us to be in a certain "state" and creates a certain physiology. "State" refers to the internal emotional state of the individual—i.e., a happy state, a sad state, a motivated state, and so on. Our IR includes our internal pictures, sounds and dialogue, and our feelings (for example, whether we feel motivated, challenged, pleased, excited, and so on). The state in which we find ourselves determines our behavior. So the IR of the event combines with a physiology and creates a state. A given state is the result of the combination of an internal representation and a physiology. And all behavior is state-related.

So these filters, in a way, determine our actions, since what is retained or deleted will have a major effect on the IR. Why is it that two people can attend the same event, and one will love it,

while the other hates it? The reason is because the IR is so dependent on the filters.

Remember that in this model the map (or the IR) is not the territory. Our every experience is something that we literally "make up" inside our heads. We experience reality indirectly, since we are always deleting, distorting and generalizing. Essentially, we experience our representation of the experience of the territory and not the territory itself.

In a study of communication at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970\* the researchers determined that in communication, seven percent of what we communicate is the result of the words that we say, or of the content of our communication. Thirty-eight percent of our communication to others is a result of our verbal behavior, which includes tone of voice, timbre, tempo and volume. Fifty-five percent of our communication to others is a result of our non-verbal communication, i.e., our body posture, breathing, skin color and movement. The match between our verbal and non-verbal communication indicates the level of congruency. †

Our model for the Basis of Personality includes the following major elements that make up the personality:

## THE TIME LINE

Who are we but our collection of memories? For years, psychologists have agreed that our past experiences do determine who we are and how we act. (Although the examination of memories has recently fallen into disfavor among psychologists because they did not know what to do with the memories or how to affect them.) Memories are recorded and stored as we age and with time, they have more and more influence. Our Time Line is the memory coding of the brain. It is how people encode and store their memories. Otherwise, how would you know the difference between a past memory and a future dream? With the discovery of Time Line, we also have, for the first time, the ability to change significant numbers of a person's memories in a short time. Obviously, changing a substantial number of a person's memories will have an impact on the person's personality.

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\*"Kinesics and Communication," R. Birdwhistle, University of Pennsylvania, 1970.

†See "Structure of Magic II" for a full description, Grinder, J., et al., Science and Behavior Books, 1976.)

In addition, our behavior is guided by decisions that we've made in the past. Whether conscious or unconscious, these decisions affect our behavior in the present. Our decisions are stored in the Time Line, and through Time Line we gain access to them.

## META PROGRAMS

Meta Programs are the deepest level, content-free programs that filter our perception. Meta Programs serve the purpose of deletion and distortion, and they maintain or break our generalizations. There are four basic filters to perception that are our most basic Meta Programs. They are similar to Jung's personality types as outlined in the book *Psychological Types*.\*

The four simple filters then combine to produce roughly twenty or so complex filters. You may not have thought of it yet, but the question of whether "the glass is half empty or half full" is the result of one of these filters in operation. Meta Program filters do their work in a way that is independent of and devoid of any content. That is, they filter perception in a way that they do without regard to content.

## VALUES AND BELIEFS

How people encode their most cherished values, beliefs and attitudes also has a profound effect on the personality. With background information on how values, beliefs and attitudes are formed, how they are encoded in the brain, and how people judge good and evil or right and wrong, we can also predict their internal states in reaction to certain situations, and therefore predict their behavior. Knowing this, we can also change their values. Values are primarily responsible for our motivation, and will determine how we spend our time. Values create the primary feelings that determine our motivation and therefore our actions. Values are how people choose and evaluate their actions.

Finally, inside the individual there are parts (minor personalities, or systems of values, if you will) that maintain the internal workings of the personality and tie all the elements together. We

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\**Psychological Types*, Jung, C., Princeton University Press, 1971.

believe that internal conflicts among the internal parts are responsible for many personality problems, including simple incongruities, as well as more severe health problems and personality disorders.

These are the elements that make up the personality in a normal, healthy human being (and even in those who are not). We include these elements in the Basis of Personality along with the means to make permanent and lasting changes in the individual.

The basic ideas in this book were originally developed by Dr. Richard Bandler, to whom we are indebted for his insight. Because much of this book was taken from transcripts of our teaching seminars, it may read more like the spoken word than the written word. We agonized over this question in the process of writing this book, and have decided that to rewrite the entire manuscript would delay this valuable information in reaching people who could really use it. And so with this caveat we offer you our model: Time Line, The Basis of Personality.

# Time Line Therapy And The Basis of Personality

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ISBN 978-178583283-3



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Popular Psychology  
Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP)