

The **Sourcebook** *of* **Magic**

**A Comprehensive Guide to
NLP Change Patterns**

Second Edition

L. Michael Hall, PhD

with Barbara P. Belnap, MSW

Preface by Ian McDermott



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Foreword

A Magician's Sourcebook

"Magic is hidden in the language we speak. The webs that you can tie and untie are at your command if only you pay attention to what you already have (language) and the structure of the incantations for growth ..."

—Bandler and Grinder (1975, p. 19)

The Birth of Sourcebook

Originally, I wrote this book due to a conversation that I had with Barbara Belnap about the need for a single source for the central NLP patterns for therapists. That conversation occurred at an NLP Conference in Salt Lake City and enabled me to catch a vision of collecting the central NLP patterns. I wanted to collect all of the central patterns that help us to create greater resourcefulness and excellence in everyday life.

When I first began collecting the patterns, I was a psychologist in private practice in Colorado and Barbara was a psychotherapist working in the context of Managed Care in Utah. Our idea was to present the NLP patterns as rich and wonderful processes for anyone who wanted to do *brief psychotherapy* with clients. All of that seemed to make good sense to both of us. After all, Managed Care in the USA at that time was highly focused on making therapy both *brief* and of *high quality*. To us, NLP was a natural and obvious choice. I thought we would identify the cognitive-behavioral processes in NLP and specify *how* to use this powerful change model in a step-by-step fashion.

To that end I set out to create a format that would fit that structure. It was then that chaos crashed our party. The chaos was the realization that NLP patterns apply to far more than just therapy. To only, or mainly, apply them to therapy falsely suggests that NLP is a therapy. It is not. NLP is more essentially *a modeling of human*

experience, and especially human excellence. Therapy is for hurting or wounded people who need remedial assistance to get over traumas and to get on with life. Yet NLP focuses much more on excellence, health, mastery, genius—in a word, on what works well. It is much more oriented to *generative change* than it is to remedial change.

So that's when I changed the focus of the book from NLP patterns for therapists, brief psychotherapy, and managed care, and re-directed it in a more general way to collecting and categorizing NLP patterns for everyone. That's what this volume of *The Sourcebook of Magic* is all about—offering 77 core patterns of NLP that manifest the structure of magic (language) and the incantation patterns of growth.

Magic for All Domains

If as Bandler and Grinder write, “magic is hidden in the language we speak,” and if we can use language and patterned processes for making transformative changes in the way we think, feel, speak, behave, and relate—then you will find all kinds of patterns in this Sourcebook for performing magic that changes minds and lives. These core patterns can easily be translated and applied to many domains:

- Business Excellence, Management, and Coaching
- Education
- Psychotherapy
- Personal Growth, Development, and Effectiveness
- Sports and Athletic Coaching
- Interpersonal relations
- Communication Enrichment
- Negotiation, Mediation, Conflict Resolution
- Profiling styles, personality, and skills
- Modeling

The Context of “Magic”

If this is a Sourcebook of Magic, then what is this “magic” and what is the context of the magic? The *magic* is what happens in the mind-body-emotion system when words and processes lead us to alter our maps and create a different reality. NLP began by noticing the *magic* that three therapeutic wizards created (Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls, and Milton Erickson) by the power of their language patterns. By just saying words, patients left their offices or trainings with a new lease on life. How does that happen? How do such magical interventions work?

If you are new to NLP, you will find a brief introduction in the first two chapters. NLP is a field about change. It is about transformation and development. It is about the structure of excellence—how it works, how to map it, and how to replicate the best practices. What the expert or genius knows, learns, values, and produces only seems like magic when we don’t know the structure. When we know the structure, the power and effectiveness is still there, but gone is the confusion, myths, darkness, and inability to pass the magic on.

The Metaphor of Magic

Why the word “magic?” What’s that all about? In NLP, we typically use the term *magic* in a special way. It does *not* designate external magic or any kind of actual magic that changes the laws of physics. “Magic” here means none of that. The term rather refers to *the seemingly wild and wonderful and magical effects* (the changes and transformations) that occur when we know *the structure* of subjective experience.

When we do not know *how* subjective experience (the way our mind-body-emotion system works for motivation, health, language and so on) works, we are clueless about our experiences. We are also clueless about those desired experiences which we would like to create and experience. We are in the dark about the *whys* and *wherefores* of change. And without knowing that, we are handicapped in *how* to transform things and in recognizing the leverage point of positive transformative change. When we do *not*

#13 Six-Step Reframing Pattern

Concept

As we get inwardly “organized” in the way we think, feel, speak, and behave, we develop various facets or “parts” of ourselves. These parts operate not only to accomplish outcomes; they also establish *meanings* about things. When these meanings become habitual, they drop out of our conscious awareness so that we no longer consciously attend them. It’s at that point that they begin to operate at what we call *unconscious levels*. In the NLP model, we say that behind every belief, emotion, behavior, habit, etc., there is some “part” organized to accomplish something of value due to some frame-of-reference (or meaning).

Over time, these parts become more and more streamlined—automatized. As this happens, they begin functioning as our basic frames-of-reference. This saves us time, trouble, energy, etc. It is what Bateson called one of the “ecologies” of the mind (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972). Yet this also can create major problems for us. As things change, our organized “parts” can become increasingly irrelevant, inaccurate, and even sabotaging.

For example, if, as a child, we developed a part to “keep our mouth shut” because “kids ought to be seen, not heard,” then we might have installed a “nonassertive” program based on those old frames of meanings. Initially, that part functioned appropriately and usefully. Then, over time, it would become less and less useful and increasingly more problematic. We outgrow many old programs and so they are outdated, but many will continue to operate and so need updated.

The Six-Step Reframing pattern addresses “programs” of behaviors, habits, emotions, etc. that have become unconscious, automatic, and unyielding to change. We now need to address them at an unconscious level to invite them into a new reorganization. This technology becomes useful when conscious thought (as in goal-setting, education, or reframing) doesn’t work, or when the response continues to operate even against our better judgment. This pattern works well for habits such as smoking, nail biting,

phobic responses, etc. If you or another says: "Why do I do this?" or "I hate the part of me that ..." then try this pattern.

Use this pattern to re-align conflict parts and to create integration, self-appreciation, and harmony. Our unconscious mind has already established numerous communications with us—we call them "symptoms." This pattern gives us a way to use these symptoms in developing more functional behaviors. It's interesting that today John Grinder (2002) says that this is the quintessential NLP pattern and Richard Bandler says that this pattern is worthless because it is old, takes too long, and has been replaced with many other more efficient patterns.

The Pattern

1. Identify a behavior that you find troublesome

What behavior or response pattern do you have that fits one of these formats?

I want to stop doing X.

I want to do X, but something stops me.

2. Establish communication with the "part" that produces this behavior

As you go inside, ask yourself this, "Will the 'part' of me that generates this behavior communicate with me in consciousness?"

As you quiet yourself to notice how your mind-body system responds, notice any internal responses: feelings, images, and sounds. What did you find?

Thank that part of you, "If this means *Yes*, increase in brightness, volume, intensity." "If this means *No*, let it decrease."

You may also use idiomotor signals such as designating one finger to move in response to "No" and another to respond to "Yes."

3. Discover its positive intention

As you go in, ask, "Would you agree to let me know in consciousness what you seek to accomplish that is positive for you by producing this behavior?" This is a Yes/No question, so just wait quietly for a response.

If you get a *Yes*, ask, "Do I find this intention acceptable in consciousness? Do I want to have a part that fulfills this function? If you had other ways to accomplish this positive intent that would

work as well as or better than this behavior, would you agree to try them out?"

If you get a *No*, then ask, "Would you agree to trust that your unconscious has some well-intentioned and positive purpose for you, even though it won't tell you at this moment?"

4. Access your creative part

There's a part of your mind that comes up with new ideas, are you aware of that part?

Would the part of you that runs the unwanted behavior be willing to communicate its positive intention to your creative part? Good. Now, using the positive intention, let your creative part generate three new behaviors that it would evaluate *as useful or more valuable than the unwanted behavior* and let it communicate these new choices to that part.

5. Commit the part

Think to yourself, "Will the part that has run the old behavior now be willing to use one of the three new alternative behaviors in the appropriate contexts?"

Let your unconscious mind identify the cues that will trigger the new choices and experience fully what it feels like to effortlessly and automatically have one of those new choices become available in that context.

6. Check for ecology

Is there any part of you that objects to having one of these three new alternatives?

Are you fully aligned with this?

#14 Aligning Perceptual Positions Pattern

Concept

Our ability to perceive things from out of our own eyes (first-person perspective) and from out of the eyes of another person (second-person perception, the "empathy" perspective), and from an observer position (third-person perspective) can get out-of-alignment. Structurally, each of these perceptual resources can operate as separate "parts." This was developed by Connirae Andreas.

Chapter Nine

Meanings and Semantics

Patterns for Enhancing Neuro-Semantic Reality

“The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing their inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”

—William James

In previous chapters, we have explored a great many facets that play into what we call “*personality*.” We have explored the various “parts” of our mind and emotions, our identity, our mind-body states of consciousness and the language that drives them. Now we are ready to move to the wild and wonderful and zany and neurotic world of *meaning*. It’s not that we have not already encountered meaning, we have. It is rather that we will now explore it explicitly and discover the multiple levels of meaning.

As a semantic class of life (Korzybski, 1933/1994), we live, emote, experience, rejoice, and suffer because of meanings. Yet meaning, as such, does not exist in the world. Meaning is not a *thing* of the world. It doesn’t exist “out there.” It never will. It cannot. *Meanings* as a nominalization arise from the interaction of our mind with things or with the world. It is a thing of the mind; it lives and moves and breathes only in language and in symbols. This means that it takes a “mind” for meaning to emerge (meaning results from “minding”). And in human affairs, it takes a human mind or consciousness to create meaning. The original term goes back to a German word that designated “holding” something like an idea or representation “before the mind.”

As a cognitive-behavioral model, NLP and Neuro-Semantics focus on the structure and transformation of meaning. Why? Because that’s our Control Center. Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, made

this assertion in the first century in his book, *Enchiridion*: “Men are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them.” Where do our experiences, distresses, joys, neuroses, ecstasies, and so on arise? Mostly from our construction of meaning. It’s not just *what* happens to us, or what we experience, it’s what we think about it—how we interpret it, the meanings we attribute to it. We attribute meanings to things, about ourselves, others, the world, etc., and by means of that attribution process, we create our semantic reality—our *neuro-semantic reality*.

In this chapter, we separate the dimensions of *meaning* for special attention. The map that codes meaning may need changing or reframing. We create meaning when we frame, we create a new and different meaning when we reframe. This, in fact, is the power and magic of the reframing patterns.

#55 Content Reframing Pattern

Concept

What is *meaning*? How does meaning come into existence? What creates it? Can we change it? What are the consequences of changing it? These are a few of the questions that intrigue us as we explore the structure of human experience and the focus of Neuro-Semantics and NLP.

Actually, *meaning* arises in the most innocent way. It happens given the nature of our brain-body system and it happens every day as we move through the world. It happens when we encounter empirical see-hear-feel things and events. It happens because we *represent* those events and situations in our minds. That is, we create movies in our minds of what we see, hear, and feel. We use our sensory-based representations for recording the world and for carrying that world around with us as our constructs. That’s what a *meaning* is—something we hold in mind. So as we *hold representations* in mind, we link those movies with various experiences. This creates the first level of meaning. Yet we do not leave it at that. From there we do something even more significant. We create higher-level abstractions, which we code in language and higher-level symbols, and use them to frame our

representational movies. And when we do, we create a frame of reference or a meta-state.

This frame-of-reference creates the meanings we give to our first-level meanings—the meaning of our meaning. We hold frames of references in our definitions, intentions, decisions, understandings, etc. This begins the neuro-semantic reality that we then feel in our bodies. What does “meaning” mean as it moves up the levels? Since meaning does not occur in the world, but only in a human mind-body, *meaning* refers to the linkage between things external (or internal) with our internal thinking-and-feeling states. Meaning refers to our matrix of frames. What does anything mean then? It all depends, does it not? It depends upon a great range of things:

- The *person* making the linkage.
- The *context* within which the person makes the linkage.
- The *mind-emotions* evoked in the linkage.
- The person’s *learning history*.
- The *cultural frames* of meanings and messages sent by others in an environment.
- The *state* the person immediately comes from.

All of this highlights the complexity of meaning. Who would have thought that *meaning* could have meant so much and could have depended upon so many contingencies and upon so many different kinds of contexts? Normally, we don’t even think about such things. We live inside our matrix and it is outside of our awareness as our semantic atmosphere. More commonly, we think that a thing “means what it means.” No one ever explained all of this to us. We might have even assumed that “meaning” somehow existed in the dictionary apart from a meaning-maker!

Yet because meaning emerges from our thinking, evaluating, explaining, attributing, believing, interpreting (coded in our neuro-linguistics) along with numerous contexts (cultural, personal, somatic, etc.), meaning is one of the most fluid processes around. What significance does this hold for us? Several things:

- Anything can mean almost anything.
- Nothing means anything in and of itself.

In this second edition of *The Sourcebook of Magic* you will discover afresh the seventy-seven basic NLP patterns for transformational magic. As well as describing the patterns it also presents the key questions that allow you to guide a client. The patterns are succinctly presented with new insights into the cognitive-behavioral mechanisms that make the neuro-linguistic and neuro-semantic approach so powerful.

The Sourcebook of Magic arose in 1997 from a desire to collect in one place the basic or core NLP Patterns. Today it remains an excellent resource for coaches, therapists, psychologists, trainers and managers. The patterns are uniquely sorted and separated into key categories; those that deal with Self, Emotions, Languageing, Thinking Patterns, Meaning, and Strategies. This book also provides guidelines for knowing what to do when and why. An outstanding resource for all those interested in the cognitive-behavioral model called NLP.

“Michael Hall has done it again! This book is a great reference work for any therapist or coach who wants to apply NLP to help their clients. In short, anybody serious about using NLP for change work should have a copy.”

Patrick E. Merlevede, MSc
Co-author of *7 Steps to Emotional Intelligence*



L. Michael Hall, PhD has authored many ground-breaking works on neuro-linguistics, communication, emotions and motivation. One of the foremost authors on the NLP scene, he is dedicated to taking its techniques into new and exciting realms of therapy and personal development. He currently works as a psychotherapist and trainer in Grand Junction, Colorado and is an internationally renowned trainer.


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