The Oxfordshire School Mentoring Handbook
# CONTENTS

Introduction .................................................................................................................... 3
Positive Psychology for Mentors .................................................................................... 5
  What is ‘positive psychology’? .................................................................................... 5
Happiness and Wellbeing ........................................................................................... 5
Positive Emotions ....................................................................................................... 7
Motivation ................................................................................................................... 9
Resilience ................................................................................................................. 11
Character Strengths .................................................................................................. 13
Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 14
Further Reading and Information .............................................................................. 14
NLP Mentoring and Coaching ...................................................................................... 15
  Introduction to NLP ................................................................................................ 15
  Before You Start – preparing yourself ..................................................................... 17
  Opening the Relationship - Exercises to build engagement and awareness .......... 20
  Getting to Goals - Turning problems into outcomes .............................................. 24
  Building Resources - making the most of positive experiences ....................... 29
  Building Perspectives ......................................................................................... 31
  Completing and Reviewing Progress .................................................................. 33
  Resources and Learning More ............................................................................. 34
Case Study 1 – Cheney School, Oxford ....................................................................... 38
  Case Study 2 – The Marlborough School, Woodstock ......................................... 41
What was taught ....................................................................................................... 45
Case Study 3 – Gillotts School, Henley-on-Thames ................................................. 51
Bibliography/Resources List ...................................................................................... 55
AUTHORS

- Venetia Mayman – Senior Adviser, Raising Achievement Service
- Ilona Boniwell – Senior Lecturer, Positive Psychology, University of East London
- Kate Graham and Phil Reed – NLP Practitioners
- Sylvia Hawken – Deputy Head, Cheney School
- Christopher Hart – Deputy Head, The Marlborough School
- Margot Howard – Gateway Leader, Gillotts School

Production: Helen Johnson
Editor: Venetia Mayman
Supported by funding from the National Behaviour and Attendance Strategy, Oxfordshire
Introduction

During 2004, when secondary schools sent me their intervention plans to show how they planned to use the funding they received from the Key Stage 3 Strategy, it became clear that many schools were using a range of mentoring strategies to help the underachieving learners they had identified. As a result, in 2005-6 we provided a variety of training to help teachers develop skills in mentoring and coaching. Most teachers are natural mentors, but we wanted to help them with new skills and tools drawn from the rapidly expanding worlds of life coaching, business coaching and professional mentoring. We were able to draw on the exciting developments in some of our own schools to model good practice. Some of us were fortunate enough to have discovered the perspectives offered by positive psychology and Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP.) As a result we commissioned experts in these fields to contribute to the Oxfordshire training.

2006 saw the introduction of the 2+3 project aiming to raise attainment in 5+ A*-C including English and maths for the cohort taking GCSEs in 2008. As schools developed their plans for working with the target group it became clear again, that mentoring was a popular strategy. As a result we decided to collect together some of the developments we knew about, together with advice from specialists in positive psychology and NLP in this handbook. We hope that it will make interesting reading and be of real help to mentors and the students they work with.

When you hear on the news that such-and-such a city is the happiest in Britain (it’s currently Brighton) it is positive psychology that provides the objective measures of well-being. Ilona Boniwell’s chapter gives you an introduction to the outcomes of positive psychology. It will help you identify young people’s strengths, work with their motivations and build their resilience. It may also give you ideas for the way in which you want to develop and promote your school’s values. What about a Random Acts of Kindness week in your school?

Neuro Linguistic Programming may be unfortunately named, for some people it connotes a combination of computers and lobotomy! However, NLP offers a wonderful range of tools for building rapport with a student you are mentoring, focusing on positive outcomes, noting and marking successes and having the confidence to change track and work in different ways. Kate Graham is an NLP coach and led the NLP mentoring pilot with Chris Hart at The Marlborough School which you can read about in this handbook. The chapter she has written with Phil Reed gives you really practical ideas for helping students by identifying goals, reframing negative emotions and experiences, asking well-focussed questions and finding positive intentions in their relationships and environment. One of the great strengths of NLP is that it uses strategies beyond talk and builds on a wide variety of thinking and learning styles.

Sylvia Hawken’s piece on the mentoring framework at Cheney School offers a broad context for senior managers to consider ways in which different kinds of mentoring can contribute to success in meeting your school’s priorities. The piece by Margot Howard from Gillotts shows the way in which the restructuring of a school to vertical tutoring puts the student and good mentoring practice at the heart of raising achievement. All three case study schools would say that they are on a journey, that their programmes change and develop every year as they are evaluated and revised.
You will find a range of recommended reading in both NLP and positive psychology chapters and a useful bibliography and resource list at the back of the handbook. Many thanks to Chrissie Spring for her work on this.

Every secondary and special school will receive 3 copies of the handbook. You are welcome to photocopy extracts from it. If you would like to order more at a cost of £5.00, please contact HelenL.Johnson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please give us feedback via Helen. We look forward to hearing about further developments and hope to publish an updated version with more case studies in the future.

Venetia Mayman
Senior Adviser
Raising Achievement Service
June 2008
Positive Psychology for Mentors

What is ‘positive psychology’?

You might have heard of the term ‘positive psychology’ on TV, radio or even in fashion magazines. But what is it really? What does it stand for? In a nutshell, positive psychology is a science of positive aspects of human life, such as happiness, well-being and flourishing. Differently from self-help books though, it aims to bring solid empirical research into areas such as flow, personal strengths, wisdom, creativity, motivation and characteristics of positive groups and institutions.

Psychology has more often than not emphasised the shortcomings of individuals as compared with their potentials. If you were to mention to the average person on the street: “I am going to a psychologist today”, what would they assume? I don’t need to spell it out, you know the answer. Today, psychology is predominantly associated with problem fixing and following, by and large, a “disease model”, favoured by medical professionals. Positive psychology is different, it focuses on the potentials. It is not about merely making someone feel better, but aims to understand things that make life worth living instead. In short, positive psychology is not concerned with how to move individuals from –8 to –2, for example, but with how to bring them from +2 to +8.

Even though positive psychology is a relatively young science (only about ten years old), it has much to offer to mentors and coaches. First of all, it can help them to understand the way human minds work – for example, why and how we can motivate ourselves. Secondly, it can suggest some practical tools to enhance well-being, flourishing or motivation and harness one’s strengths.

In this article five existing areas of work in positive psychology will be introduced: well-being, positive emotions, motivation, resilience and character strengths, and discuss how this knowledge can be utilised in mentoring practice.

Happiness and Wellbeing

It would probably be true to say that well-being and happiness are the key areas of interest for the positive psychologists, which attracted a lot of research attention in recent years. They have been so well studied that we can now say with confidence what makes people happy and unhappy across a number of different cultural contexts. We know that most people adapt to even most extraordinary events (such as a serious injury or winning the lottery) within about three months, that happiness can buy you up to 9.4 extra years of life, that it enables people to stick at a boring task for longer and that we can change up to 40% of our happiness through intentional efforts. Given that the Every Child Matters Agenda and the new Children’s Plan place well-being in the heart of many educational initiatives, it seems worthwhile to understand what it really is, what is and is not important for happiness and how we can try to enhance our own well-being and that of our mentees.

Psychologists often use the terms happiness and well-being interchangeably. Regardless of the term used, they believe that happiness consists of two components: what you think about the way your life turned out to be (the cognitive component) and
how you feel about it (the affective component). Even though well-being may seem hard to capture, there are quite a few good questionnaires around that would help you to attach a number to how someone feels about life. Many of these questionnaires can be found on [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org)

If you had to guess, which ones of the following would you say are important for happiness: money, friends, having children, getting married, looks, health, moving to a better climate? Is your age important? What about your level of education? The safety of your community? Common sense predicts that the most likely source of satisfaction with life is objective circumstances but often this is not the case. There is very little relationship between happiness and many life circumstances we consider so important, that we would sacrifice years of our lives in order to have them. So if you look through scientific journals, you would find that the contents of most popular magazines advocating wealth, fame and beauty as the panacea for a good life are plainly quite wrong. Neither makes people happy. The last fifty years saw our wealth multiplied by four, whilst the levels of well-being stayed the same and even went down slightly. There is a caveat here. Having enough money to pay for rent, bills, food and clothing is important for one’s well-being, but once the basic needs are satisfied, increases in wealth would not make us any happier. Furthermore, desiring wealth actually leaves us less happy.

There are some research conclusions based on a very large number of responses around the globe that seem to contradict common sense. For example, moving to a sunnier climate, like Australia, would only change our well-being by one to two percent. One’s objective health (what doctors say about it) is irrelevant for our happiness, though what we think about it is. Having children does not make you happier and having under fives and teenagers actually makes you less happy (this is especially true for fathers). Saying that, having children can make your life more meaningful, and also parents tend to live longer.

So what makes us happy? If I had to summarise the three main influences on well-being, the number one would have to be relationships. For example, two famous American researchers found only one main difference between the happiest 10% of students and the rest. The very happy students had a rich and fulfilling social life. They spent the least time alone, had good relationships with friends and had a current romantic partner. They did not have fewer negative and more positive events, nor differed on the amount of sleep, TV watching, exercise, smoking, drinking, etc. The number two is having a meaning in one’s life, which may be related to believing in God or in the future of humanity. Thirdly, having satisfying work or study is also very important for happiness, especially if you find yourself fully engaged in your activities.

There are quite a few pieces of advice one can offer on the basis of research findings. One activity that is bound to undermine your mentee’s wellbeing is comparing themselves with media stars and personalities. On the other hand, finding a new way to do a routine activity is likely to result in engagement. This also applies to consciously choosing one’s activities, rather than merely going along.

A number of positive psychology techniques have been tested by researchers through controlled experimental studies, when the intervention group is compared to the control one. Amongst these is the so-called “gratitude visit”. This technique rapidly increases
one’s happiness level, though only temporarily. Such an activity would be good for a younger child, but may be inappropriate in its original format for a young person. The exercise involves writing a letter to someone one feels grateful to, describing what this person did and what effect it had on the recipient. The letter writer then needs to arrange to see the future recipient go to visit them and read this letter out loud. Whilst a teenager may find this activity highly embarrassing, you may want to recommend them to simply send the letter.

The next technique has been found to lastingly increase happiness and decrease depressive symptoms for up to six months. The instructions are fairly straightforward: “Every night for one week look back at your day just before you go to bed and find three things that went well for you today. Write them down and reflect on your role in them”. Writing down is important as this helps one to focus on the events. Reflecting on one’s own role is no less essential, as it contributes to the sense of perceived control that, in turn, has an impact of well-being. Finally, the timing of this exercise is significant – either recommend it for one week, or once a week for six. Studies have shown that the well-being of those who carried it out three times a week for six weeks actually slightly decreased, which suggests that there is such a thing as too much and that boredom is a rather powerful destroyer of happiness.

It is likely that teenagers will enjoy writing or talking about their best possible selves. Ask your mentee to think of a desired future image of themselves and visualise it, so that they can see it as best as they can.

Another powerful exercise is practicing random acts of kindness. These can range from very small simple helpful behaviours, like opening a door for a stranger, to some pretty big acts, like helping someone with computer problems. Not only does this make other people feel better, it also increases the happiness of the giver, especially if several acts are carried out on the same day. It is also important to vary these acts so that they remain fresh and meaningful.

Don’t also forget some centuries-old techniques that have not lost their effectiveness despite their age. Recent psychological and neuroscientific research shows that not exercising may only be paralleled with taking depressants. Exercise is essential for healthy brain functioning, it reduces depression, turns one away from worries and rumination, increases a sense of agency and self-worth and improves one’s physical shape.

Positive Emotions

Many intuitively realise that a bit of humour during a long meeting can make all the difference to productivity and engagement, but few know why this is the case. The Broaden-and-Build model of positive emotions shows that positive states broaden our attention and thinking, which means that we have more creative and a greater variety of thoughts. When we are experiencing positive emotions, such as joy, interest, contentment or hope, we are more likely to be creative, to see more opportunities, to be open to relationships with others, to be more flexible and open-minded. Positive emotions have also been found to undo the effects of negative emotions and stress, and build important physical, intellectual, social and psychological resources, such as physical abilities, self-mastery and communication skills. Perhaps even more
importantly, positive emotions develop our resilience that can be very important in challenging times.

Understanding the power of positive emotions can help us utilise them in a mentoring context. A mentee who experiences positive emotions is more likely to think of a greater number and more creative options for solving a problem; he or she is also likely to develop competence in a variety of skills. There are several ways to enhance positive emotions, for example, through appreciating and savouring past events, reframing daily activities in positive terms or discovering a positive value in them. A bit of laughter is good for tension release, and would also have the broadening effect. The emotion of contentment can be enhanced through breathing, relaxation, yoga, imagery exercises and also by practicing meditation.

Meditation does not need to be difficult or connected with any religious beliefs. Give it a try yourself and then see if it could be appropriate for your mentees. Make yourself comfortable and relaxed and close your eyes. Allow any thoughts, images, feelings and other sensations that enter your mind to pass by without interference or letting yourself be carried away by them (like observing a moving trains from the platform). To anchor yourself, focus on your breathing (but don’t attempt to change it in any way). If some pressing or interesting thoughts appear, make a mental note to come back to them later, let them pass and gently focus on breathing again. It is important not to pressurise yourself in any way or try to block your thoughts forcefully. Some people meditate by repeating a sound or a word (a word used for this purpose is called mantra and does not need to have any meaning). Studies show that meditators are able to attain both a state of deep physiological rest, and also heightened state of awareness and alertness. They also experience less anxiety and depression.

The other way to enhance positive emotions is through savouring past memories and events. This exercise is called a positive portfolio. It can include photographs, pictures, objects, letters, cards, CDs or DVDs – anything that is significant or pleasurable for the individual. It is likely that one will find this process very enjoyable. It is worth having a look through one’s positive portfolio when one is feeling down, giving oneself plenty of time to browse through the pages and objects that are meaningful and important.

Another possibility is to design a perfect day for oneself; identifying all the things and activities that one really likes doing and crafting a day that includes these favourite activities. The only remaining task then is to put these plans to action and live that perfect day out. These activities do not need to cost much; in fact, you may even want to adapt this exercise by asking your mentees to design a beautiful day that is also free.
Motivation

Why do we get up in the morning? Why don’t we just stay in bed all day, doing nothing? Motivation is the force behind getting up, going to work or school, opening a study book in the middle of the night, etc. Yet this force is not as simple as it looks on the surface.

There are two fundamental types of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. Intrinsic motivation reflects the inborn human tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to explore the world, to exercise our capacities. When we are intrinsically motivated, we do something for the sake of it, simply out of enjoyment or interest. We are extrinsically motivated when we do an activity for the sake of something else or in order to attain some other outcome (e.g. going to work in order to earn money).

Researchers believe that we move closer towards being intrinsically motivated if our three fundamental human needs are satisfied. These needs are relatedness, competence and autonomy. Relatedness (or love) is about feeling connected to others, caring for them and feeling that someone loves and cares for you, as well as having secure attachment bonds with close people. Competence relates to being able to effect our environment and achieve desired outcomes, knowing that one is good at something, having a sense of achievement frequently. Finally, autonomy is about being able to make choices, knowing that one is free to decide on the direction of their life, voluntarily engaging in activities and behaviour. When these three basis needs are satisfied, both our intrinsic motivation and well-being increase.
Based on these findings, it is easy to see which activities are likely to enhance intrinsic motivation. These need to be freely chosen, moderately challenging, those we feel we can do well, and those that bring us close to other people.

You may wonder why autonomy is so important for intrinsic motivation. If we are relatively free to choose our actions, we are more likely to choose those that we intrinsically enjoy. However, if we feel forced or compelled to do something, it is more difficult for us to internalise the motivation. That is why offering rewards for activities that should be intrinsically motivated actually serves to undermine performance and achievement. This is an interesting finding that is worth paying attention to. It transpires that intrinsic motivation does not co-exist well with extrinsic rewards. If a child or a young person has carried out a successful activity intrinsically and is then presented with an extrinsic reward (such as money or a tangible prize), he or she will not want to do this again for purely intrinsic reasons. Although this discovery was about for several years, it is surprising to what extent the education and corporate worlds are still relying on external rewards. Instead, there could be a much greater reliance on the use of praise and public acknowledgement that enhance autonomy and competence and thus do not undermine one’s intrinsic motivation.

Next time you are trying to motivate someone, give them a chance to make as many choices as they can, though not going over the top. As everyone who has ever bought a mobile phone knows, some choice is good, but too much choice can be counterproductive. It is also important to acknowledge how they feel about different situations, whether and how their point of view differs from that of others. That would enhance their autonomy and, consequently, intrinsic motivation.

Avoid rewarding, forcing, or cajoling children or young people to do homework or other desired activities. This may lead to a lack of responsibility. Instead, providing a meaningful rationale for an activity, making it more interesting, empathising with difficulties, giving plenty of praise, supporting autonomy and being interested and caring, are the keys to raising self-motivated individuals.
Resilience

According to positive psychologists, resilience is a class of phenomena characterised by patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant adversity or risk (so both the feeling “I am ok” and adverse conditions must be present). In commonsense terms, resilience can be expressed as the capacity to bounce back in the face of negative events.

There are several factors that serve as protective ones and can enhance the resilience of a child or a young adult. These factors may be intrapersonal, like cognitive abilities, optimism, self-discipline, attractiveness, good sense of humour. Positive family circumstances, like good parenting, postsecondary education of parents and their involvement in their child’s education, can also contribute a great deal. It is likely though that your mentee may not have any of these positive factors present in their lives. In this case, it is important not to forget that the school, other pro-social organisations and also you, as a competent and supportive adult, can be protective and enabling factors.

Needless to say, this capacity to bounce back is critical in our times. Given that 20% of people will suffer a major depression at least once in their lifetimes and that the onset of clinical depression happens as early as around 15 years of age, we live in the age of a major depression epidemic. A number of coping or resilience-enhancing strategies are suggested by researchers, targeting one’s perception, emotions, thinking and actions. You may want to give some of these strategies a try yourself, before recommending them to your mentees.
Perception

- Any problem can be turned either into an opportunity or learning experience. So, something might be gained even from loss. To do so, take stressful situation as a challenge, a chance for a change or growth, try to find a gain in loss.
- Distance; detach yourself (taking, for example, a professional attitude, as doctors often do to cope with their daily job).
- You can transcend the experience by looking at the situation from a wider perspective (e.g. the world situation, spirituality).
- If you feel that you do not have the strength to face the problems that surround you, withdrawing and letting them lie for while can provide a break to recuperate (it may need only a couple of minutes). Redirecting attention can help you to let go of worries and other circular thoughts in these moments. You can design something that is always at hand especially for this purpose. Anything pleasant that you can focus on and ‘lose’ yourself in can be used: an object (e.g. a ring, stone, photo), a pet, view etc.

Emotions

- Blocking emotions may be necessary to deal with the situation effectively, but they should not remain permanently blocked.
- Emotional release (crying, shouting, screaming) can bring eventual relief, but only if it leads to acceptance (when grief dominates). Research shows, however, that when anger is dominant, letting off steam does not lead to improvement.
- Relaxation and meditation can also calm you down.

Thinking

- You can decrease importance of an incident by observing it in context (remember those less fortunate), or by comparing it with other possible troubles that may have befallen you.
- Humour can also be effective, not only because it reduces the importance of a problem, but tension too.
- Focus on a positive aim or outcome (e.g. you may cope with exhaustion or pain in sport by thinking about the victory).
- Unfavourable events can be taken either as misfortunes or as a challenge. The former prepares you to lose, the latter to win. So, it is important to recognise and confront defeatist thoughts (e.g. thinking how unlucky you are), before they start influencing your decisions and coping ability. You can oppose them by accepting the situation (count your blessings) and trying to find something positive in it.

Action

- If something can be done, you can focus on the problem (get more information, try to find solution, confront or negotiate).
- If nothing can be done, you can distract yourself by activities (sport, hobbies, work), entertainment (TV, music, etc.), having company, observing (a scenery or other people), rest (sleeping, reading, fantasying), various pleasures, or mood altering consumption (food, moderate drink, or medications).
- Sharing, asking for advice or help, and receiving comfort may also significantly reduce the effects of a challenging situation.
Character Strengths

Do you ever get your mentees to talk about what they are good at? How easy do they find identifying and naming their own strengths? Most of us are very good at describing what we can’t do well, but when it comes to talking about our strong sides, we are either lacking the language or are overwhelmed by modesty (false or real). One major positive psychology initiative has been the development of a comprehensive taxonomy of character strengths, called Values in Action, or simply VIA. It is based on the assumption that human strengths are possible to understand scientifically, and that they are not secondary to weaknesses. Applying several criteria, the authors of the taxonomy identified 24 major strengths, ranging from critical thinking to humour. The VIA classification and the corresponding inventory (freely available from www.positivepsychology.org) offer us a new language to talk about character. Furthermore, we now know that five specific strengths, including curiosity, gratitude, hope, love, and zest are the strengths most robustly associated with happiness.

It is often assumed that top achievers set high goals and low achievers set low goals. However, research indicates that top achievers know their capabilities and set their goals slightly above their current level of performance, whereas low achievers are unaware of their abilities and often set unrealistically high goals. Essentially, top achievers build their personal lives and careers on their talents and strengths. They learn to recognise their talents and develop them further. They find the roles that suit them best. And they invent ways to apply their talents and strengths in their lives. As far as weaknesses are concerned, they manage rather than develop them. Also, following one’s strengths provides a sense of direction, generates vitality and optimism, and helps in developing confidence. Applying these findings to the real world, mentoring can be employed not only to identify a mentee’s strengths, but also to evaluate how well they are being utilised in school, work placement or in their personal life, and to help the mentee use them to best effect.

As a first step, ask you mentee to find out what their strengths are by visiting www.authentichappiness.org and completing the VIA Strengths questionnaire. It is free and should take no more than 30 minutes. At the end, they will receive individualised feedback about their top five (“signature”) strengths. This exercise in itself has been found to significantly increase well-being and decrease depression, although only temporarily.

Ask your mentees to use their top strengths more often during the next week. They may also like to consider what these strengths can tell them about their future career choices, extra-curricular activities they are involved in or the way they are relating to others.

Another useful exercise that lastingly increases well-being is to use one’s signature strengths in a new and different way every day for at least one week. So if one’s top strength is curiosity and interest, they may like to get to know a person from a different culture and learn about it through talking to them. If one’s strength is zest and enthusiasm, they can think of ways to make exciting any assignment they are about to undertake. Those high on emotional intelligence would do well to listen to their friends and siblings empathically, without preparing rebuttals. They could also try to watch a favorite TV program or film muted and write the down feelings observed.
You can ask your mentees to create a beautiful day for themselves (see positive emotions) utilising their top strengths. For example, if one has a strength of appreciating beauty, this day could include a trip to a favorite museum or botanical gardens.

Conclusions

Many more areas of positive psychology research can offer great insights to a practicing mentor: How can a state of flow or optimal engagement be facilitated? Can optimism be learnt? How can time be used to increase not only efficiency, but also wellbeing? What can positive psychology teach us about developing fulfilling relationships? I hope that positive psychology can enhance our service to our mentees whilst avoiding oversimplifications that focus only on the positive side can sometimes lead to.

Further Reading and Information

- [www.positivepsychology.org](http://www.positivepsychology.org) (Main Positive Psychology Website)
- [www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/](http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/) (Self-Determination/Motivation Theory)
- [www.authentichappiness.org](http://www.authentichappiness.org) (Positive Psychology Questionnaires)
- [www.unc.edu/peplab/broaden_build.html](http://www.unc.edu/peplab/broaden_build.html) (Broaden-and-Build Theory)
NLP Mentoring and Coaching
Kate Graham and Phil Reed

Who this section is for
• Teachers engaged in any one to one work
• Youth workers, YOT workers
• People training or supporting other mentors (of any age)

Introduction to NLP

NLP coaching offers a range of skills and tools to support belief and behaviour change. It starts from the premise that we are all fine – and that our behaviour just happens to be our best choice at the time. It is our role as mentors to enable young people to have more choices and to be able to choose behaviours and beliefs that really help them get on and make the most of their potential.

Imagine a garden full of weeds. You could take several approaches. One would be to focus on pulling up all the weeds to give the plants you want a chance to grow. This could be seen as a remedial approach. You could go a step further and re-seed with the plants you want – a generative approach. Or you could go the whole hog and re-landscape, reorganising the way the garden works, restructuring it, so that it drains better, has deeper, more fertile seed beds, is more sheltered from bad weather, releasing the potential that was hidden in the soil up to now. This evolutionary approach is what NLP coaching, at its best, sets out to do.

Another way of looking at this is summarised in a simple formula:

**performance = potential – interference** (Tim Galwey)

i.e. we all have loads of potential, but we generally don’t achieve anywhere near it due to the unhelpful messages we send ourselves, which mess it all up.

I (Kate) was at a salsa party recently – we were all beginners and made varying degrees of progress. I noticed that I was being held back by a small voice saying “of course I can’t do this” regardless of the fact that I wasn’t doing that badly. I noticed that the men were doing all sorts of interesting things in various ungainly ways. However one, who clearly wasn’t a natural dancer, did seem to be taking to it very easily, just letting his feet get on with it as instructed, and clearly not worrying at all – it was just another thing he was learning to do and he expected to be able to do – so he did.

That’s what high achievers do, and it’s the challenge we set ourselves when mentoring others.

- Believe in their potential
- Help them to reduce their interference
- Change will happen
What is NLP?

“NLP is a set of tools and techniques to help you deal with unhelpful patterns of thought and behaviour, and to introduce new positive and constructive ways to improve your life” (Molden and Hutchinson Brilliant NLP)

Neuro Linguistic Programming has been called the study of human excellence. It is based on looking at what really successful people do and believe, and identifying the structures and patterns at work.

NLP stands for **Neuro Linguistic Programming**, a name that encompasses the three most influential components involved in producing human experience: neurology, language and programming. The neurological system regulates how our bodies work, language determines how we relate to and communicate with other people and our programming (i.e. all the things that have influenced us since conception) determines the kinds of models of the world we create, and thus our behaviour.

The most helpful thing NLP reminds us about is that we have two minds – our conscious mind and our unconscious mind. It is our unconscious mind that acts as a vast storage area, full of information that we draw on automatically as we need it – memories of people and places, how to get to the City Centre, how to get out of bed, how to ride a bicycle, how to make ourselves feel good, and how to make ourselves feel bad. NLP techniques (and indeed any good coaching) communicate directly with the unconscious mind to allow us to bring out the hidden programmes that are interfering with our progress, examine them, and choose to change them if we so wish.

NLP has four “pillars” that underpin all its beliefs and tools. These are:

- Rapport – the relationship you create with the young person
- Outcomes focus – it’s about what you want, rather than the problems
- Sensory acuity – how you know when you are succeeding
- Behavioural flexibility – if what you do isn’t working, try something else

This manual covers each of these pillars.

Using this Manual

Our intention in writing this part of the Mentoring Folder is to offer you insight into what NLP can potentially offer you as a mentor, and to give you some practical ideas and exercises that you can use straight away. The manual is structured to follow the process you might go through with a young person – from preparing yourself, through the first meeting, setting goals, gathering resources and overcoming barriers, to completion and review.

NLP coaching is no different from any other form of coaching or mentoring in that good practice includes:

- Learning from each experience – a basic reflection note is included as Appendix II. It really is worth taking the time to write up each session and draw out your learning. This is particularly important if you aren’t having regular supervision.
• Trying out any exercise that you think you might use with a young person on yourself or a colleague first. This is important, not just so that you understand how to use it, but also to be aware of what it is asking of the mentee.

• Setting up some form of regular supervision, whether individual or group.

Before You Start – preparing yourself

“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.” (Seneca)

The aim of this section is to assist you in preparing for a mentoring session, so that you are in the most appropriate state for who ever you are meeting.

General preparation

How ready do you feel to coach or mentor another person? If you are new to this sort of work, or helping others to learn how to mentor you might find the following exercises helpful.

• Think of someone who really helped you learn and grow (whether a teacher, manager, neighbour etc). Bring them to mind. How did they make you feel? What did they do that was so helpful? Note these down. If you have a picture of this person, or anything else that helps to bring these positive memories back, put this with your notes, so that you can recall the feelings easily.

• Cast your mind back and collect some times where you really succeeded in giving another person the confidence to believe in themselves, do something they thought they couldn’t do… It can be in any setting. What was it that you did that was so helpful? What beliefs did you hold about the person you assisted? Make some notes to refer to.

• Ask a number of people (friends, colleagues, family) what they think your unique (positive) qualities are. If someone needs to tell you the negative stuff as well, just ignore it for the purposes of this exercise! Collect these in a way that you can easily see or read them. This exercise will help to give you a greater sense of your own strengths and qualities, so that you are better able to assist the people you coach in eliciting their strengths.

Preparation immediately before the session

The likelihood is that you will be rushing from another appointment or class, feeling you have barely enough time to turn round before going into the session. This is not an effective way to start mentoring (or anything else for that matter). We suggest that it is better to be a few minutes late, and prepared, than on time, totally unprepared.

Three key steps are:

• **Sit down, breathe.** Bring your attention to yourself. How are you feeling right now? Take a few moments to notice and acknowledge any feelings you may have, especially if you have any non-mentoring agendas with the young person you are about to meet (this is a real challenge if you are also teaching them).
• **Bring the young person to mind.** Read your notes from last time if this helps. What is your intention for the session? Let this emerge in very broad terms e.g. “This time I really want to give him/her the confidence to look at a range of options” or “this time I would like to him/her to leave the room feeling that s/he is fine as a person, regardless of any behaviour”. It isn’t helpful to be too specific – after all, a key tenet of any mentoring relationship is that the mentee sets the agenda – your role is to serve them in creating and achieving it.

• **Let yourself get curious** about the young person you are about to meet. If you struggle with this, think of a time when you were really curious about something – really wanted someone to tell you something (easy for the gossips amongst us!). What are the things that you get really curious about?

Then, staying curious, wonder whether your mentee will actually be waiting for you….!

**Getting started – building rapport**

> “Rapport is how you show another that you accept the validity of their experience for them.’ (Ian McDermott and Wendy Jago. 2001)

The aim of this session is to assist you in getting started confidently, and to build your awareness of your abilities to create rapport quickly and easily.

**What is rapport – and how to you build it?**

As teachers, you are likely to be very good at creating rapport with young people, though this might be a largely unconscious competence.

Rapport is a state of connection, or mutual trust and respect. It is created by meeting the other person in their map of the world. Very simply, it is showing them at an unconscious level that you are similar to them. We are drawn to people who we think are like us – and are more likely to feel we can trust them. This isn’t the same as losing yourself – you remain who you are, but you operate flexibly to enter their world. In our experience this does take some practice, and it is easier with some people than others. It isn’t the same as agreeing with them, more to recognise that their experience is valid – for them.

Matching and mirroring is a basic way of enhancing rapport, and we have assumed that you are already trained in this.

**Yes questions.** The more rapport you have with someone the more confidence and space you will give them to accept themselves and make any changes they need to. One easy way to practice building rapport is to ask questions that the young person can say yes to, such as “are those new trainers?” “was it X taking you for French just now?” i.e. give some thought to questions that it is easy for them to say yes to.

**Pacing and leading.** I (Phil) recently spent a weekend with an old friend I had not seen for a long time. We went for a walk in the park. I sensed that he was unsettled, and that he had something important that was concerning him. I matched his walking pace, and breathing, and before long he wanted to discuss what was on his mind.
When you are creating rapport with someone you are pacing their experience, joining their reality and map of the world. After a while it will cease to be you matching them, but the two of you in a dance – and they will be matching you as much as you them. This means you can then change what you are doing, whether it is breathing, moving, or talking. This might be simply breathing more slowly, if they are very strung up about something – take a deep breath, and then watch to see if they follow you a little later. If they are moving around a lot (e.g. jigging their foot, shifting in their chair), so you can slowly reduce your matching movements – if you have rapport, they will unconsciously follow you. Remember - rapport is a process; it is dynamic not static. It can be built quickly – and equally it can be quickly lost.

Tip- when matching, it isn’t necessary to move exactly the same part of your body – the key is to match the energy, e.g. by tapping your finger at the same rate as they are kicking their feet.

The first meeting

The first meeting with the young person you are mentoring is the start of a new relationship. You may not have met them before, though it is more likely that you will know them already, so that what you will be introducing is a new way of relating to each other. As this can be quite a challenge for both teacher and pupil, it is important to create a space, both physically, emotionally and mentally, that is new for both of you, so that you can meet as two equal human beings, mentor and mentee.

It is important to think about:
- What you want to achieve from the first session
- Where you will meet
- When and how long for
- How you will create this new space

This is how Phil starts off with new mentees:
“first of all, I make sure we meet somewhere quite public, so that it feels safe for them, and also for me. I keep it quite short as well, so that it isn’t intimidating. However, I'm quite clear what the 10 minutes is all about – in that time, I want to give them enough information about what I will be doing so that they can choose whether they would like to go ahead. That's the most important thing – everything else is a bonus!

Phil introduces himself, and invites the young person to draw a circle on a piece of paper. He then asks them to drop the pen onto the circle so that it makes a little mark, somewhere in the circle. He then explains that the tiny mark they have made is their brain – and all the rest of the circle is made up of lots of different parts of them (illustrated by drawing lots of other dots in). He goes on to explain that all these other parts influence what we do – and what we will be doing in the sessions is getting more of these other parts talking to each other and connected up.

By this time the young person is usually quite intrigued and engaged. Most young people when doing the circle exercise will look at Phil so that he gains eye contact at this very early stage. He tells them, that as we get older, our ability to connect up different parts gets worse, so in fact the young person is going to be better at this than he will be…
This exercise effectively creates a new arena in which to work – the young person’s circle (i.e. their unconscious mind, but not labelled so), and introduces the language of parts, which is extraordinarily helpful in helping people accept different aspects of themselves, reflecting NLP’s gestalt origins.

Phil usually then follows this with a list of things young people generally would like to change (e.g. feeling more self confident, getting less angry, coping with bullying etc) and asks them if there are any that they especially want to work on. Some will identify areas straight away. With others he may just see small changes in expression or eye movements as they look down the page.

Opening the Relationship - Exercises to build engagement and awareness

Your aim over the first few sessions is to learn as much about the young person – in such a way that they learn too, and to really build your relationship with them, so that the level of connection and engagement you have together (rapport) gradually deepens.

The three exercises we suggest here are all helpful for getting a young person interested in themselves and starting to stand back a little to discuss themselves and how they see themselves in the world.

**Favourites – learn about their map of the world**

Just the simplest of questions – your aim is to discover what the young person really enjoys doing, who they admire, where they feel most relaxed – what gets them going.

It may be easiest to start with people they admire – i.e. find common ground with a discussion of the England team etc, then gradually work towards what it is they admire specifically, then having built up some rapport, you can ask them more about what they like doing.

Here you are building up resources: people they admire may come in as useful models, or sources of additional perspectives (section 6). By being flexible you will be able to move the mentoring sessions into an environment closer to one in which they feel relaxed – e.g. one youth worker takes a lad to the park to throw stones into the pond. You are starting to collect information about their map of the world, and in so doing you acknowledge what is important to them. So if your mentee is enthusiastic about cars, giving time for them to discuss everything related to cars; types, steering, speed, gear changes, will not only make sense to them, but will also give opportunity for you both to engage.

**Life wheel and questions**

This is a basic coaching tool which we have used with people of all ages. The wheel is attached as Appendix 1 and the questions we suggest you ask are set out below. You can invite the young person to change the headings on the wheel to ones that are personally meaningful – the version attached here has been amended for school use, but will suit some people more than others.

The young person should complete it themselves, i.e. they take each section, and rate how satisfied with that part of their life on a scale from one to ten. They
then draw a line across the segment to show that score (so the higher the score, the closer the line will be to the outer edge of the wheel. The more varied the scores, the more bumpy the resulting “wheel”. We then suggest you work through the questions below to help them draw out what they can see and what it means. (Practise this with a friend first, so that the questions flow and you can concentrate on the answers)

The questions can lead to areas where young people might want to set goals (e.g. one girl after reviewing her score for love and romance set getting to know some boys as friends as one of her goals over the term. She succeeded!). It may also work as a baseline for future evaluation, though as it is done early in the mentoring relationship when levels of self awareness may still be quite low, people may over-score.

**Questions to use with the life wheel:**

- **What did you notice from doing the wheel?**
- **Where are you in balance?**
- **Where are you most out of balance? What are you only just putting up with?**
- **What do you want to change?**
- **For the one you want to change, what would be 100 per cent?** (e.g. if you have a 3 for school work right now – what would a 10 be like – or that’s too hard, what about a 6 or an 8?)
- **Which of these wedges require attention right now?**
- **Is there a wedge that has leverage -if you changed this it would affect a lot of the others?**
- **What actions would you like to take?**

Kate used this in a youth mediation project as an exercise for 14 year-olds and a parent to complete together (taking turns to ask questions of each other). Each mediator who used it reported back on how the quality of listening and engagement with each other had improved. It is a great way of giving attention to another person.

**Values – what’s important to me in life?**

Helping a young person identify and clarify their strengths and core values is enormously helpful in assisting them to take greater personal responsibility for their actions, and have more sense of self. There are many ways to identify strengths – the Positive Psychology section highlights several online questionnaires that have been designed for young people.

This exercise aims to help a young person to establish what their values are, at a time when they are likely to be emerging from a mass of other peoples imposed values. It can be done as a written exercise between sessions, as a discussion or a mixture of the two.

Create a list by thinking about the ideas below. Don’t worry about getting it “right” and capturing all your values. Your list will be a work in progress. Your values don’t have...
to be a single word; they could be strings of words or sentences. Find the words that work for you. Try thinking about these things:

- **What is important to you?**
- **What do you care about?**
- **What do you want in your life?**

**Peak experiences**

When has life been rich, full, exhilarating, flowing? Pick a time. There may have been challenges, but you were on a roll. It may have been a few minutes, or hours, or weeks. What was important about that experience? What values were you honouring?

**Crazies**

What drives you nuts or makes you angry or frustrated? Think about one of these things. What value is being violated? What is being stepped on? What is it that you can’t live with and still be true to yourself?

**Invisible values**

What is so much a part of who you are that you haven’t even thought to put it on the list?

You can then take this on to explore which of their values they are really living by, where they are compromising themselves, and where they would like to change their behaviour to link more closely to who they are.

**Tip**: to mentors and anyone training mentors – it is a really good idea for mentors to do this too, so that you are really aware of your own values, and the extent to which you are living them – young people will pick up any incongruence!

**Eliciting goals when they don’t know what they want**

If a young person was able to sit down and articulate exactly what they wanted in life it is unlikely that they really need a mentor, unless they are facing some significant external obstacles. Most of us don’t have much idea, of an idea of what we want, but we are generally a great deal clearer about what we don’t like. Therefore it makes sense to start with this. Phil uses the exercise below frequently and to great effect.

**Exercise – list all the things you don’t like**

Get the young person to write out a list of all the things that are bugging them and making life difficult. Then choose one and develop what might happen if the opposite, magically were to be true. A recent conversation doing this went as follows:

e.g. “I hate French because the teacher is always getting at me”

“What if, lets pretend that, magically, the complete opposite might be true. I know its not, but just if it might, just for a magical moment, be true. What might that be like?”
“you mean, like the teacher might welcome me with open arms, and say she was really happy for me to be in her class? I don’t think so!”
“Just imagining that she did do that – what might you say?”

“I would feel really good. Probably wouldn’t say much, just maybe give her a little smile if she wasn’t looking too much. I quite like French, just that it is really difficult.”

“What might you say to the teacher?”

“I would be able to ask her if I don’t understand something. And I could put my hand up when I know the answers”

In this conversation we have moved the young person into a different experience of the world, albeit one safely labelled “fantasy”. What Phil did then was to suggest that the student tried out this new behaviour in class, and discussed the possible reactions from the teacher. So that something that was a problem gets turned into a bit of action research from the young persons point of view – and starts to harness their natural curiosity.

Phil emphasised that by simply choosing to change their intention, on approaching the classroom – it was likely that something different would happen during the lesson. At an unconscious level, they will give off different signals which the teacher, again at an unconscious level, would pick up. The teacher might be confused or unsettled at first before then (often unknowingly) reciprocating the change in behaviour. The student is asked to report back what they notice. In this instance, the student reported that the teacher had been calmer and taken more time in explaining something which had previously been difficult for them to understand.

**Importance of collecting baseline information at this stage**

One of the brilliant things about mentoring young people is the progress that they make. It is really important for both you and the young person that they can see this, especially as “hard outcomes” such as improved exam results can take much longer to materialise. The notes you take at the first meeting, the things the young person says they want to achieve or move away from and any information you gather from teachers and tutors about current behaviour will all help to provide a baseline against which to compare.

This will be helpful at two stages (at least) in the mentoring

- **About half way through** – generally mentoring relationships have a low point in the middle, when the excitement has worn off, and the real work is actually being done, but not a lot seems to be changing. At this stage reflecting on the progress that has actually been made can provide helpful motivation and encouragement. Feed back feeds forward.

- **At the end.** Was it worth the effort on both your parts? Young people may be astounded to see where they have come from – and you are equally likely to have moved with them and forgotten where they started. Review techniques are summarised in 7 below.
Your regular reflection after each meeting will also be an invaluable source of information about progress, as well as supporting your learning, and helping when you get stuck. (Which most mentors do from time to time!)

Getting to Goals - Turning problems into outcomes

“I have had thousands of problems in my life - most of which have never happened”
Mark Twain.

You have got the stage where you have built up a good level of trust and explored some of the areas that the student is struggling with. With some mentees you will move quickly to helping them clarify their goals, and working with them on these. With others you may need to pace their negativity for rather longer before you can get them to the stage where they can plan constructively. This section helps you through this process.

Reframing

Mentoring generally involves a great deal of reframing. Reframing is the art of offering someone a different perspective on a particular issue or experience. To this you need to have built up a good level of trust, so that the young person doesn’t feel that you are invalidating their current experience, but that you are with them, working for their goals. It is how we, as mentors, help someone find ways to move forward, and away from stuck situations.

There are two main ways to reframe – by context, and by content.

To demonstrate this, Phil often asks the student to think of a particular incident that has a positive emotional charge for them (something legal). He then asks them to imagine it as a mini-film, only a few seconds long, and to rate 1-10 the experience where 10 is the most positive.

Then to give it a title; e.g. “Me Winning at Sport”. He now simply suggests different frames for them to use with the picture; old antique, tacky pink plastic, wide-screen, highly polished designer frame. With each frame he asks them to notice their feelings 1-10. They see how their feelings change with the frame.

Just as a person can instantly change their image simply by wearing different framed glasses – so we relate differently to our experiences by changing our internal frame. The content remains the same; the context (frame) changes.

We can also re-frame by imagining different content and alternative outcomes (saving the game for your team) such as the example given in 3.4 above.

More reframes: “as if” and magic wands

Some times people are really stuck, and all the questions you ask them seem to get nowhere – and you start to feel stuck too! “As if” and “magic wand” are two really useful questions which are especially helpful when someone feels so hemmed in by their reality that they can’t imagine themselves being different in any way.
As if
“What would it be like if you were X (substitute admired person from earlier exercise) – what would he/she do or say in this situation?”

“Imagine for a moment that you are X – just walk across the room like they would walk, and say what they would say”

or more generally – “what would a very confident person say to that?”

The as if frame invites the young person to try on another belief or way of being. It’s a pretend game of course, but the act of being confident, saying confident things will start to rub off – one of the instances where changing behaviour can change beliefs. Phil sometimes describes it in terms of the clothes/trainers we once loved; they go in and out of fashion. So too do our beliefs and ways of being go beyond their sell by date – but we often first need to ‘try on’ and ‘pretend’ we’re comfortable with the new clothes/beliefs.

When I (Kate) started out as a self employed consultant it didn’t take long to realise that people wanted me to be confident and say that I could solve their problems for them. Looking rather uncertain and feeling wobbly wasn’t getting me very far. So for a month I played “as if” I was confident – and soon discovered that it was actually quite easy. It didn’t involve being unreal, and it did make other people a lot happier. Plus I started to get a lot more work!

Magic Wand

“If I was to wave a magic wand and you could have whatever you wanted, what would that be?”

This can have utterly transforming effects, and was the question a colleague asked me when I had got stuck with the mentoring project, and we were discussing how to take it forward. My answer connected me with what I really wanted for the project, placed that in front of me, and off I went, and the subsequent sessions went really well.

Another loosening question, when people are striving for what seems impossible perfection is:

“What would be the second best option?”

This can bring other possibilities into the arena and open up discussion again.

Turning a problem frame to an outcome frame

“Are they stumbling blocks or stepping stones?”

This is possibly the simplest and most important reframe of them all.
When someone is complaining about a problem we can ask them about the problem, how long they have had it, whose fault it is, who they want to blame, the problems the situation is causing them, and why they can solve it.

Exploring a problem like this can help the person to feel listened to, but it also has two downsides.
- It doesn't help the person find a solution
- You may get stuck “in” the problem too (you have jumped into the water to save the drowning man rather than throwing them the life belt and holding out a long branch for them to get hold of).

Or we can ask them what they actually want, what it would be like when they have achieved this, what else might improve in their life when they have achieved it, what resources they have already that might help them, and what they have done in the past that was even a tiny bit similar. Notice how new space opens up. Then, we could ask them what their next step is.

If you are training mentors, get them to try these different questions out on each other, and notice how the energy and answers change. It is also helpful to get them to reflect on their own tendencies – do they generally explore problems or generally focus on outcomes?

Creating a well formed outcome – powerful questions to help someone set goals that they will achieve!

"It's our choices, Harry, that show us what we really are, far more than our abilities." Albus Dumbledore. Harry Potter - JK Rowling.

This session gives us some really useful questions to ask ourselves and other people who are serious about changing an aspect of their lives. Helping people set realistic goals that they really believe in is a key mentoring skill. As always, work through these questions for yourself first, and try them with a friend before you work with a young person. (N.b. people trained in solution focussed brief therapy will see considerable similarities here.)

How we do it
Think of some aspect of your life that you would like to change, or something you would like to achieve. How important is it to you? Give it a mental score out of 10, where 10 is very important. If it’s less than a 7, you might want to consider whether there is something else that might be more important to you.

State in the positive
That means, for example, if the young person started with something like “I would like to feel less lonely” you need to help them turn it into a positive.

- “If you were less lonely, what would you be?”
They might then say, “I would be more connected”, or whatever.

Once you have it in the positive, you can explore its importance to the young person by asking:
• “If you had X what will that do for you?”

This helps to draw out how important the issue is, and also does it in a different way to
the 1-10 question above.

Why is it important that it is in the positive? If we say what we don’t want, our brain will
automatically focus on .. the very thing we don’t want! And as we tend to get what
we focus on, that isn’t going to help us a great deal.

Consider the instruction “Don’t think of a blue tree”

Did you?! So the language we use is important in terms of where we focus our
attention.

Is it their own outcome?
One course participant said that as her outcome she wanted her daughter to drop her
current boy friend – after some discussion she decided that this wasn’t really her
outcome. She chose a new outcome to trust her daughter more – this was entirely
within her control to start and maintain, so she worked on this, with great results.

Turn it on its head – what’s working about their current behaviour?
Sometimes someone will keep saying they definitely want to change (e.g. do more
homework etc) but never quite seem to. This may look like someone being lazy, or
procrastinating. However, often if we don’t make a change that we say we want, it is
because there are some very good reasons not to, hidden in our current behaviour.
For example, one girl said she used the evening when she should have been doing
homework as a time to relax a bit, and to see a friend who went to another school.
Both important things, that also need time –and at the moment, her easiest strategy
was to do them in the evening. On investigation she came up with several ways of
doing this differently, so that she could do her homework.

So, just ask about the benefits of the current situation. Quite often it is hard to think of
anything that is right about our current situation or behaviour, because that’s why we
want to change it. However there will always be some benefits, because for whatever
reason we have chosen to behave in that way up to now. So be patient! In my NLP
training I had chosen the outcome of being happier. I discovered that I could list 31
benefits of being miserable!

Tip – it is fine for the mentor to take notes and it is nice to make a list for the other
person that you can hand back to them after they have finished.

Tip – people will usually list a number then dry up – don’t stop here – wait patiently as
the really important ones will usually emerge at this point.

Once you have a list you can help the young person decide which things they want to
preserve in their changed situation or state.

The questions below will help a young person start to set goals
Try the following:

• What do you want? (positive, owned, important….)

- 27 -
• **What would it be like when you achieved it?** Get them to describe what they will feel like, what they will be seeing, hearing. Get them to tell you what you will see them doing and hear them saying. Imagine it along with them!

• **What else might improve when you have done this?** (A brain expanding question! Also checks whether other things might change that you are less keen on, and thus block the goal)

• **What benefits from your current situation/behaviour do you want to safeguard?**

• **What have you done in the past that might be similar?**
  Tip – encourage people to think broadly here – helpful experience can come from any aspect of life.

• **What is your next step?** Get them to be specific!

**After Goal Setting - Bringing it all together - using a timeline**

This is a great exercise to do after you have been talking about someone’s goals. It involves imagining a line stretching out into the future, and that somewhere on this line is a place where the young person will have achieved their goals. You will find, when you try this out, that when people walk along the line, they will always find a place where they can feel this achievement. It is an entirely kinaesthetic experience, and it only won’t work if either you don’t believe in it, or the person doesn’t believe they can have their goal.

In this latter case, you may well find that you can ask them to walk to a point where they nearly have it, and explore this position. The steps listed below are guidance for the mentor – the young person should just follow your instructions. (DO try this on a colleague first – it’s quite easy, but requires confidence and fluency. It’s a chance to practice your “as if” frame!)

- **Stand at A, where you are right now, and state what you want to achieve, in the positive, knowing that you have the capacity to start and maintain this, and that it is really worthwhile to you. Bring what it feels like to mind.**
- **Imagine that there is a place in this room that represents the point in the future where you have the change you want.**
- **Walk to this place (B), as if you were walking into the future.**
- **Stand here, and notice what you feel, what you hear, what you see. Notice what you might be saying to people and who is around you. What is the date? (NB mentor – make sure they are speaking in the present tense, i.e. they are literally in the future.)**
- **Look back to where you started from and give yourself some advice. Looking back, what was it that you did first that enabled you to reach this position?**
- **Go back to where you started (A), back in the present, right now, and receive the advice from you in the future. Notice how it feels.**
Getting young people to walk around is fun for them and very powerful. I did this with a small group of 14 year old girls, and whilst there was much giggling and funny faces at first, they all found it one of the most memorable and useful experiences of the course. It is quick and powerful, and really brings achievements to life – and once you have experienced yourself succeeding, you are more than halfway there.

Building Resources - making the most of positive experiences

Having helped the student clarify their goals, you can now start the work of helping them achieve them. Often this will involve gathering resources. In this case we mean internal resources – the beliefs that they need to keep going and do well. To succeed students need to be able to make the most of positive experiences, hear positive messages and engage with positive feelings. They also need to be able to detach from and learn from more difficult situations. Often you will find that a student has quite the opposite skills. This section gives you a simple diagnostic to explore what the student needs most, and some exercises to develop and use positive associations.

Association and dissociation

When we associate fully into an experience we are truly living it, feeling the emotion, whether happy, scared, frightened, excited etc. If we are dissociated it is as if we are observing what is going on. Both of these are very useful, if used at the right time. Some people are very good at dissociating themselves from both positive and negative experiences, and thus rather float through life without really connecting to themselves, other people and life in general. Others find they can associate better into either negative or positive experiences.

- Associating into both positive and negative

If you can associate into positive experiences, you will feel great. However, by fully associating into negative ones as well, you will also feel really down. **Challenge: Learn to dissociate to gain perspective on issues**

- Dissociating from both positive and negative

Being good at dissociating from negative things means you can step back and handle difficult issues. That’s great – but it also means that you miss out on experiencing all the positive things in life – they just don’t touch you. **Challenge: learn to associate into +ve experiences.**

- Associating into negative and dissociating from positive

This is a recipe for unhappiness – you can’t feel the good times, and you fully associate into the negative ones **Challenge: learn both to distance from –ve events, and to connect to +ve experiences. Be patient!**

- Associating into the positive and dissociating from the negative

Here you can fully experience all the happy positive experiences, and when negative things happen can dissociate enough to be able to step back, see any positive aspects and also learn for next time, and so achieve what you want. **This is a happy place to be!**
How do you tell whether someone is associated or dissociated?
If someone is associated, they are in the here and now. You should be able to see that they are very much in their body, in their feelings, being emotional, excited, upset, engaged with what ever it is.

If they are dissociated – i.e. can see themselves “over there” they are likely to be calmer, observing, thinking about things, imagining how something might go, and possibly talking to themselves.

Often a lot of our work will be in helping young people practise associating with positive times and build up skills to distance themselves from being overwhelmed by emotions in difficult situations.

Ways to help a student connect with positive times
Rapport is key here, as otherwise you risk seeming to invalidate their experiences of hurt and anger, which may be their dominant emotional state. The first step is to get them talking about things they feel positive about – such as the “favourites” in 3.3.1. Then encourage them to talk about a particularly happy or positive experience. Notice how they are when they talk – are they revisiting the actual experience, re-living it? Or are they observing it, watching themselves?
Your task is to help them re-live it, to literally step back into the experience. You can ask them some questions to explore this.
“what does it feel like to be back there?
“what can you see?” “what can you hear yourself and other people saying”

If the young person says that they can’t feel anything, as they are watching themselves, invite them to step into the picture and live it again. (It sounds wacky, but just try it!)

Circle of excellence
This technique helps a student focus on the challenge ahead and to gather resources from their past – or from someone they admire, to enable them to do something that seems a bit scary or challenging. It is ideal for exam nerves, worries about interviews or public speaking of any form. It requires both you and the student to be able to associate into positive experiences.

Outline steps.
1. Ask the young person to imagine a circle on the floor
2. Get them to describe the situation that is worrying them, and what they would like to happen. (e.g. I would like to be able to answer the questions fully and clearly, using all my knowledge).
3. Ask them “what qualities do you need for this situation (e.g. being calm, knowledgeable)” – and make sure you use the persons own words (you may want to jot them down). Aim for three or four at the most – so they find the most important ones.
4. For each quality, ask them to think of a time when they really felt they had that resource (e.g. felt really calm). When you ask them about it, put yourself in that
state too. Get them to remember the state and then as they remember it, invite them to step into the circle and relive the experience.

5. As they stand in the circle, help them to relive the state by asking them what they see, to feel what they feel, hear what they hear. I.e. so they are completely in the experience once again. You should see some physical changes that will indicate that they have taken on the state.

6. The person steps out of the circle – and then go to the next resource and repeat 4, and 5 until you have relived each state that the person needs.

7. Then ask the young person to step back onto the circle and re access all the resources, feel them all – and then imagine that future situation – and notice how different it feels with all these resources. If it’s a magic broth, does it have all the ingredients it needs?

8. If everything feels fine, that’s great! If it feels like something’s missing explore what quality it is and repeat 4-7 until its all fine. Imagine that they can pick up the circle and carry it with them wherever they need it.

I most recently did this with a young person who wanted to feel more confident in social settings. It seemed to work fine, but the biggest surprise came to me when I went to a friends wedding and found that rather being my usually rather shy and diffident self, I suddenly possessed amazing conversational powers, and had a whole series of entertaining encounters!

Building Perspectives

"The world as we see it, is only the world as we see it. Others may see it differently." Albert Einstein.

In the last section we looked at how you can help make the most of positive experiences. However, for some young people the issue will be that they are overwhelmed by their emotions and unable to see any form of bigger picture. They need help to step back and learn from the situation. This section offers some ways into exploring positive intentions behind strange behaviour, and exercises to assist detachment and perspective.

Discovering positive intentions behind strange behaviour – in ourselves and others

Sometimes it is easier to start to explore perspectives from a more distant position, i.e. looking at the experiences of others rather than the young persons own behaviour. It can be a bit of a game! Here are some situations where the behaviour could seem wrong. What might be the positive intentions behind the behaviour?

Note – if you are making these up for your mentee start with relatively simple external ones and move as below into the more personal.
1. A car shoots round the corner at 50mph in a 30 mph zone and goes through a red light…..
2. A 16 year old boy suddenly starts ignoring his friends
3. Your mother nags at you to eat your vegetables
4. Your new neighbours get really angry with your cat when it’s in their garden – they even throw things at it.
5. You have an opportunity to try something for the first time, e.g. horse riding, but you find yourself saying no, even though part of you would really like to try…. (here the positive intention of part of you might be to protect you from making a fool of yourself or hurting yourself in some way)

If we think hard enough there will usually be some form of positive intention there, even if it only seems positive from the other person's point of view!

This also applies to times when we get cross with ourselves. Sometimes we can get very frustrated with our own behaviour (e.g. saying to ourselves “why did I say such a stupid thing” or “why did I ignore that person who was trying to help…..” It can really help to calm down, stand back and just think about what we were trying to do, and learning from what happened.

Ways to gain perspective and emotional distance from situations.

It is easiest to explain this by imagining a situation. Say your mentee, Chris, is upset because they have fallen out with their closest friend, Lou. They are furious, with themselves, with Lou, and with life in general. Assuming you have a good relationship built up with Chris, you could ask him/her to take the following steps:

Step 1 – first aid!
The best way to calm down quickly is to breathe, and to breathe in a special way. Breathe in, counting up to four, then breathe out counting to eight. Do this for up to 10 breaths, making sure that your out breath is always longer than your in breath. This changes the balance of oxygen in your brain and helps you to recover. Its great emotional first aid!

Step 2 – stand back and away
Tell Chris to Imagine him/herself not just standing back from being so upset, but actually being whisked up in a helicopter – so its like going in a plane, or up a church tower (only higher) so s/he can look down on her/himself, all miserable, angry upset. Say to Chris: “Once you are right up there, looking down on yourself, ask yourself”

- How is Chris feeling, that upset you down there?.

i.e. you are getting them to imagine being way up in the air, looking down on their old selves – they have separated themselves away from the upset mess below.

Step 3 – consider the other person’s situation
From this high perspective then ask Chris to look at the other people involved as well, in this instance Lou. (Though often when you do this other people will emerge as well)

- What is going on for them?

Step 4 – move forward
Having considered this we can then ask Chris
• **What are you going to do next?**

If the young person you are working with is having trouble getting different perspectives you can also try the following:
1. Get them to sit on your chair, be you, and give your advice, or ask a question
2. Suggest that they be someone they admire, and give their advice
3. If distance is the issue, they can stand on a chair, or walk outside to get more distance from the situation. (Go out with them, and leave a clear marker of the situation back in the room so that you talk about it at a distance.)

**Suggested practice for young people**

Ask the young person to try and find three situations before you meet again where they have looked into the intentions behind someone’s behaviour, and see what they discover. They could also reflect on their own intentions if they find themselves doing something that makes them feel cross with themselves.

**Completing and Reviewing Progress**

Your mentoring relationship will come to an end at some stage – either due to a fixed length of sessions, their choice, end of term, or some other reason. It is important that it ends, as you are training them in the skills and awareness to understand themselves enough to make effective choices for themselves. The final session, if you can plan it, needs to be a completion session, and reviewing together the progress they have made is a great way to do this.

**How we do it**

We will often talk the student through the journey they have been on – the things they and others said at the start, what you have done together since. Having refreshed their memory in this way you could then invite them to:

- Draw a picture of what the journey has been like
- Imagine how their best friend would describe the change in them
- Make a model (if you have plasticine etc) of how they and their life was at the start and how it is now.

As part of the evaluation process for the group training we asked the girls to write on separate bits of coloured card some reflective questions – e.g. “what was the funniest bit?”, “when were you happiest?”, “when were you most sad?” “What was most challenging?” plus a more action orientated question, such as “what was most useful?” A separate evaluation form also included the question “what are you doing differently now?” which provided some very interesting answers.

**Third party observations**

This is probably the most valuable evidence you will get, as these are opinions that will matter to the young person. Do collect views right at the start, and note what people say to you during the course of the mentoring. If you did more structured round robin questionnaire, repeat it before the last session so that you can go through the results with the young person.
Importance of feedback throughout the process

Feedback from teachers, friends, other workers is really important. This is for two reasons – it is good to hear what is changing, where and how, and it is also good to make these people more aware of the importance of their relationship to the young person being mentored, so that their development is as connected as possible.

Resources and Learning More

We hope, having read through this guide, and tried out some of the exercises, and being delighted by the results, you will be curious to learn more. Here are some selected books you may find helpful.

**NLP Books written specifically for teachers** include

- *Rediscover the Joy of Learning* Don Blackerby – very much about one to one work.
- *Righting the Educational Conveyor Belt (Red Seal Educational Series)* Michael Grinder – lots of hints for using NLP in the classroom.

**NLP Books generally**

- *Brilliant NLP – what the most successful people know, say and do* D Molden and P Hutchinson
- *The Technology of Achievement* S Andreas

**Coaching generally**

If you are interested in reading more about coaching (not specifically for young people) you may find the following accessible and helpful:

- *Coaching Skills* - Jenny Rogers. To me, the best book I have read on coaching.
- *The Coaching Manual* - Julie Starr. A very clear how to do it book (it tells you what questions to ask!)
- *Tales for Coaches Margaret Parkin* – for those who like stories – *I used several of these in the Marlborough NLP project.*

**Oxford Resources**

- **Oxford NLP practice group** – meets on the second Thursday of each month at Restore, Manzil Way, off Cowley Rd, Oxford, 7.30 pm £8. See [http://www.oxfordnlpgroup.org.uk](http://www.oxfordnlpgroup.org.uk)

- **Oxford Coaching and Mentoring Society** – meets on second Wednesday of each month from 6.00 – 8.00pm at Churchill Hospital. Contact Annie Kimblin for details and directions [anniekimblin@hotmail.com](mailto:anniekimblin@hotmail.com)
Exercises for engagement –
1. Life Wheel

Right now - how satisfied am I?

Other headings might be:

Health
Spiritual development
Physical environment (e.g. home/own room)

Or ones that matter to you – feel free to put in your own
Examples of values

Important notes

1. If you have things that are important to you that don’t happen to be on this list that’s fine – it can’t be exhaustive!
2. You may describe the same value in a completely different way – that’s fine too – use the words that mean most to you.

The list below comes from the sorts of things I have heard myself and other people say are their values. Don’t be put off if you don’t see any that relate to you – make your own list!

Accuracy
Animals
Balanced
Being constructive
Being fair
Being treated in the way that you treat others
Being useful
Being friendly
Calm
Compassion
Consistency
Challenging
Choice
Clarity
Creativity
Curiosity
Depth
Empathy
Enthusiasm
Enjoyment
Exercise
Exploration
Family
Freedom
Fresh air
Friends
Generosity
Gentleness
Happiness
Having fun
Health
Honesty
Integrity
Imaginative
Joy
Kindness
Learning

Accuracy
Animals
Balanced
Being constructive
Being fair
Being treated in the way that you treat others
Being useful
Being friendly
Calm
Compassion
Consistency
Challenging
Choice
Clarity
Creativity
Curiosity
Depth
Empathy
Enthusiasm
Enjoyment
Exercise
Exploration
Family
Freedom
Fresh air
Friends
Generosity
Gentleness
Happiness
Having fun
Health
Honesty
Integrity
Imaginative
Joy
Kindness
Learning

Accuracy
Animals
Balanced
Being constructive
Being fair
Being treated in the way that you treat others
Being useful
Being friendly
Calm
Compassion
Consistency
Challenging
Choice
Clarity
Creativity
Curiosity
Depth
Empathy
Enthusiasm
Enjoyment
Exercise
Exploration
Family
Freedom
Fresh air
Friends
Generosity
Gentleness
Happiness
Having fun
Health
Honesty
Integrity
Imaginative
Joy
Kindness
Learning

Love
Modesty
Money
Novelty
Normal
Openness
Originality
Peace and quiet
Perspective
Playing games
Quiet
Respect for environment
Respect for others
Self control
Space
Seeing the best in people
Stretching/being stretched
Taking things seriously
Time to relax
Truth
Trying new things
Understanding
Variety
Vitality
Warmth
Wonder
Zzzzz getting plenty of sleep!
Reflection Note – after the session…
This reflection structure can be used by the mentor, and also by the young person - they don’t have to show it to you.

What happened during the session that was especially useful?

What was the result and how did I feel?

What did I learn?

Thoughts and worries

What actions might I take as a result?
Case Study 1 – Cheney School, Oxford

Cheney School is a mixed Comprehensive School 11 – 19, in the City of Oxford with 1456 on roll. It is a specialist Language College. One of the particular characteristics of the school is the large number of students with EAL and there being around 40 home languages and around 350 bilingual students. It was this rich cultural diversity that prompted Cheney to apply for Specialist School status. The free school meal index is slightly higher than the national average. Four of the electoral wards in Cheney’s catchment area are in the top 20% of the ‘most deprived’ in the UK and two are in the top 10%.

School Aims and Current Developing Priorities

To ensure all students at Cheney school consistently achieve the highest ‘best in class’ outcomes in terms of academic qualifications, social responsibility, sporting excellence and artistic achievement.

Current Development Priorities

- To create a Curriculum Fit for Purpose
- To enhance Teaching and Learning across the school to engage and progress all students
- To actively engage and challenge students through enrichment and extra-curricular activities
- To communicate across the school effectively using ICT
- To promote Leadership at all levels across the school and develop Performance Management.

Pastoral Structure and Responsibilities for Management and Development of Mentoring Programmes

The school is divided into year groups from 7 – 13 with 8 tutor groups in each year group, except Year 13. Each year group is managed and led by a Head of Year and/or an Achievement Coordinator (teaching staff) or Achievement Assistant (non-teaching staff). It is the responsibility of those staff to monitor the achievement and progress of students across their year group and put in place strategies for under-achievement. Challenge/Aim Higher, keeping students on track, promoting good attendance and punctuality. Mentoring is a very important part of this process and all staff are involved in some way in the mentoring programmes.

As well as 1:1 mentoring of students by staff, we also have Peer Mentoring in each year group and 1:1 mentoring of students by outside groups e.g. Oxford University students in Years 11/12.

Aims in Developing Mentoring Programmes

Cheney School aims through its Mentoring Programmes

- To help all students reach their potential
- To help students to reflect on their learning and to learn the skills of setting themselves meaningful targets
- To provide every student with a mentor, usually the tutor, who will have access to data and information on that student and work with them and their family to help them reach their targets.
- To help students to feel safe and be able to share concerns.

**Development and Evolution of Mentoring Programmes**

At Cheney we ‘Mentor’ in three different ways

- Mentoring on Achievement Days
- Mentoring at Key stages in specific subjects
- Peer Mentoring

**Achievement Days – Academic and Pastoral Mentoring**

For two days a year Cheney suspends lessons and holds mentoring meetings between students, parents, tutors. Each interview lasts 45 mins and students are tracked throughout the year through data, both numerical and written.

The numerical data consists of a level or grade in each subject showing the students present achievement level, an effort grade in each subject, a statistical predictor in each subject which is based on the evidence from prior assessment, CAT’s, FFT’s, SAT’s, GCSE scores and Attendance data.

During the Achievement Day mentors interview students, discuss their achievement, where they are at present, where they could be and most important, what they need to do to get there or go beyond it. Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning so far, focus on the rest of the year, to see the ‘whole picture’ how they are doing in every subject and to be empowered to take account of their own learning and decide what they need to do to improve it.

This mentoring relationship improves tutoring and enables students to know exactly what they need to do to improve their performance to move up to the next grade or level.

Teachers also give each student a written target in each subject. These are SMART and are written by the students into their planners as a record of what they need to do to improve. The student planner is a vital part of the interview as students can track how well they are doing and record the outcome of the interview on a page entitled ‘Achievement Day Interview Record’.

On these two days, using the information given students, parents and staff look at strengths and weaknesses in each area, Attendance and effort scores, numerical and written targets in each subject. The student will then set themselves 3 SMART targets to raise achievement. These targets are designed to take the student out of their ‘comfort zone’ and challenge them in their learning.
Key Stage Mentoring

Form Tutors in Year 9 – 11 use the period between 2:45 – 3:00 to schedule 1:1 mentoring sessions with their tutees.

At KS5 tutors are more flexible with their mentoring time but follow the same process. The aim of these sessions is to check that a student is working towards and meeting their personal targets set.

“It allowed me to focus on my strengths and weaknesses”
“It gave students goals/direction”
“Having data sheets as a talking point was powerful”

Links with other Intervention Strategies

Mentoring at Cheney ties in with the 2 + 3 initiative, as those on the C/D borderline are usually the first to receive Key Stage and subject mentoring. Also Cheney has trained all their Year 7 tutors in “Family Links”. This approach assures continuity between primary and secondary. Through ‘circle time’ where group mentoring takes place and the use of the Language of choice.

Links with other Areas of School Development

Mentoring links in with student Leadership and the student voice. It gives students a chance to evaluate their teaching and learning and reflect on what works for them.

Peer mentoring raises self-esteem and confidence and has developed into Literacy Mentoring of Year 12 students with Year 7.

Mentoring at Cheney has raised Achievement Year on Year and helps students reach their potential; it also engages and challenges them.
Introduction

This report offers my perspective of an NLP Pilot Project, led by Kate Graham at The Marlborough School in the spring of 2007. Our evaluations with the students reveal that they enjoyed the project, responded to it, and found elements useful in their school-based social interactions. This report is in two parts – my own perspective as Deputy Head and contextual overview, and the second written by Kate, which incorporates the results of the evaluations.

Background

Having encountered NLP techniques and principles, whilst working with a professional coach, the suggestion to trial it in a school aroused Chris’ interest. We hoped that a pilot would provide a better appreciation of:

- the applicability of NLP strategies to young people;
- the contribution NLP could make in boosting youngsters’ independence and confidence;
- NLP as another potential strand in mentoring and coaching.

There is a growing interest in the application of NLP approaches to supporting children’s learning. Some writers give emphasis to developing the skills of classroom teachers (e.g. Michael Grinder) and assisting students who are struggling academically or exhibiting symptoms of ADD or other difficulties. There is also interest in how NLP can be used in the different forms of mentoring currently being developed in our schools.

As an NLP coach, Kate was curious about how NLP could be used with young people. Several of her NLP peers were using it successfully in schools in London, either working directly for the school or through specialist charities. Having introduced some NLP principles to a group of teachers, and met with some disbelief that young people could actually do some of these things, Kate was particularly curious to experience NLP in a school context.

What is NLP?

Neuro Linguistic Programming is based on the study of the beliefs and strategies adopted by very successful people in any field - therapists, teachers, business leaders, musicians and many others. It comprises a set of ways of understanding the world and a broad raft of tools and techniques designed to assist and support change. These
techniques are equally applicable to individuals, groups and organisations. It is an eclectic body of skills, and is growing as practitioners find new ways to apply it to different fields.

**Organising the Project**

Our original thoughts were to explore NLP mentoring with individual students. However school organisation meant that group work would be much easier to manage than one to one sessions. However we didn’t want to run a therapeutic group as this was not appropriate. Kate hit on the idea of teaching NLP techniques to a group of students which could then be applied to their everyday lives. Chris devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to selecting the right group of people; a small group of friends who could support and trust each other and would be responsive to the project.

**What was taught**

Kate worked with students for approximately 90 minutes on a series of six Wednesday afternoons in a relatively private quiet room. We were not able to make these consecutive afternoons due to school closures, and I suspect that this will have had a bearing on the impact of the project.

Kate met the students prior to the commencement of the project to brief them and to identify emergent issues with the students. We kept in touch regularly through e-mail and telephone, and provided mutual support at times when the project hit rocky ground, and discussed group management issues or any concerns arising from the last session. Confidentiality, within the usual parameters of disclosures, was guaranteed for students.

The project covered the following elements: powerful goals; values; presuppositions; rapport; positive states; resolving conflict and self management. Evaluation consisted of a quiz/questionnaire at the start and the end of the course, a specific evaluation form and a reflection exercise by the students. These identified the sessions and activities the students regarded as the most enjoyable/useful and revealed a positive change in students’ perception of their own mentoring skills.

Kate’s course was designed to cover the parts of NLP that would be most useful in building confidence, starting with a life wheel to get the students thinking about themselves and learning to interview others. The outline course included:

- Creating a well formed outcome – powerful goals
- Identifying our values, to assist confidence and decision making
- VAK quiz (Visual, Aural, Kinaesthetic)
- Essential presuppositions – different ways of understanding the world
- Rapport skills
- Creating positive states, and preparing for scary events (e.g. interviews, tests etc)
- Resolving conflicts with others and gaining other perspectives
- Techniques to help control our feelings and how we react to a situation.
Evaluation methodology

There were three elements at the start of the course – the life wheel that the students completed, the mentoring skills quiz, and their desired outcomes.

These were followed up at the end of the course with a repeat of the skills quiz (though not expecting great change), an evaluation form (based on the Cheney peer mentoring training project form) and an exercise writing down key words (happiest moment, most useful part, most challenging moment, lowest moment etc). The project was evaluated by Kate and Chris with LA advisers.

What we learnt

1. It worked

Despite initial concerns about the structure and lack of context, it did work for the students, in different ways, and that is really heartening. They enjoyed it and they began to use strategies in their daily interactions in school.

2. NLP Lite

Teaching NLP to teenagers is undoubtedly challenging; however by boiling down some really useful elements from NLP into some very simple steps that can be taught to people without any background in counselling these challenges were overcome. NLP can be taught to young people, and could equally well be shared with teachers with an interest in listening and development. It isn’t anything particularly fancy, and is very close to simple (NLP) coaching.

3. Group or individuals?

This really depends on the children concerned. For a group to work it probably needs a high degree of cohesion, or maturity and common purpose (e.g. a group of sixth formers acting as mentors, or really focussing on future careers and results). Otherwise NLP would be more likely to make a difference on a one to one basis, if only because of the quality of attention. NLP is not clinically proven. The Marlborough Pilot Project deliberately avoided the likelihood of working with vulnerable youngsters, and was designed to minimize counselling activities.

4a. Context and linking matters

Our reflections led us to the view that NLP training is most likely to be effective in a clear context, for example sixth form mentoring younger students so that they have people to practice with, and are aware of issues they would like to be able to address better. Equally a group could have a common focus such as career clarity, or a possibly a theme relating to friends, getting with people, coping with conflict etc.

4b. Being linked into the school is really important - so that feedback loops work, and the process integrated more into normal school life. This is also emphasised by others working on a one to one basis. Feed back can make all the difference to the mentor! It also allows for a more joined up approach to the child.
Conclusion

The Marlborough Pilot Project enjoyed success on a number of levels:

- the students responded positively and their evaluations reveal progress in mentoring skills;
- simplified NLP strategies were successfully taught to a group and used by students in sessions;
- the potential of NLP in assisting students to manage social interactions with confidence emerged;
- individual students clearly gained self-confidence from learning NLP strategies;
- Kate and Chris also learned a lot!

If you would like further information about the pilot please contact Chris at The Marlborough School.

Six sessions from Mid February to 31 March 2007
Kate Graham

Summary

This project involved six sessions over about eight weeks teaching a small group of girls some basic NLP. The aim was to find out how this worked, and whether this helped them. I worked with a group rather than one to one for timetabling reasons. At the end of the sessions, the girls’ evaluations and external observations suggest that they enjoyed the course, found it helpful, and did feel more confident.

This report explains how the project came about, what we did, what happened, and what we learnt from it.

Background

There is a growing interest in the application of NLP approaches to supporting children’s learning. Some writers give emphasis to developing the skills of classroom teachers (e.g. Michael Grinder) and assisting students who are struggling academically or exhibiting symptoms of ADD or other difficulties. There is also interest in how NLP can be used in the different forms of mentoring currently being developed in our schools.

As an NLP coach, I was curious about how NLP could be used with young people. I knew that it could be used successfully as several of my NLP peers were doing this in schools in London, either working directly for the school or through specialist charities. Having introduced some NLP principles to a group of teachers, and met with some disbelief that young people could actually do some of these things, I was particularly curious to experience this for myself.

What is NLP?
Neuro linguistic Programming is based on the study of the beliefs and strategies adopted by very successful people in any field - therapists, teachers, business leaders, musicians and many others. It comprises a set of ways of understanding the world and a broad raft of tools and techniques designed to assist and support change. These techniques are equally applicable to individuals, groups and organisations. It is an eclectic body of skills, and is growing as practitioners find new ways to apply it to different fields.

What was this project all about?

I was originally put in touch with the Marlborough School to explore NLP mentoring. However it soon became clear that the School would find group work much easier to manage than one to one sessions. This placed me in a predicament, as the advice from colleagues was to avoid groups. Managing the dynamics of a group of teenagers, especially 13-15 year olds takes specific skills and experience if they are to say anything. (And even then they may not). I was clear that I didn’t want to run a therapeutic group, and that I wasn’t appropriately trained to do so.

It then occurred to me that I could teach them NLP, with plenty of structure to support any dynamics. In my blissful ignorance (and considerable naivety!), it seemed to me that this was a both exciting and feasible task. Chris devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to selecting the right group of people, and ultimately came up with a group of four friends, all girls, who he thought would both go along with the experience and be likely to gain from it.

The purpose

We came to this project with several different purposes. I hoped that I would learn a great deal, and that I would be able to see a real difference in the girls. Chris also hoped, amongst other things, for a big increase in confidence. The girls themselves were interested in being able to talk to people more easily, being more confident, being able to resolve arguments, and passing all their exams (especially maths).

What took place

I met with each girl briefly, to explain a bit about NLP and the course, and to give them a chance to ask questions and consider whether they wanted to come along. At this point they didn’t have any questions and all were enthusiastic.

We then had six sessions of about 90 minutes (the Wednesday elective period), punctuated by half term and a school closure. Had we started earlier we could have had more sessions – six was an absolute minimum.

Of the four girls involved, three attended all six sessions, and the fourth attended sessions 3, 4 and 5.

What was taught

My original plan was to cover the parts of NLP that I thought would be most useful in building confidence, starting with a life wheel to get people thinking about themselves and learning to interview others. My outline course included

- Creating a well formed outcome – powerful goals.
- Identifying our values, to assist confidence and decision making
VAK quiz (largely in case anyone was strongly one way)
- Essential presuppositions – different ways of understanding the world
- Rapport skills
- Creating positive states, and preparing for scary events (e.g. interviews, tests etc)
- Resolving conflicts with others and gaining other perspectives
- Techniques to help control our feelings and how we react to a situation.

I covered most of these. However, from session four onwards, I completely changed the way in which I worked, what I regarded as successful learning and the overall conceptual framework for the course.

What it was like from my perspective

I started off enthusiastic, excited, wondering how it would all work, and worrying about how I would fit in everything I wanted to teach them. I was in a bubble of “how do I teach NLP”. The first session was exciting, if strange. The girls thought so too – “weird!”.

In the second session I started to realise that I was pushing them outside their comfort zone, and was concerned that I was asking them to do things they couldn’t easily do. The third session was on rapport, and was not successful at all. A number of factors, such as a new person in the group, my failure to notice I was off balance and recover my grounded centre, caused a virtual absence of rapport in the room!

This was a very low point and at this stage I really questioned why I was doing this, and my suitability for the job. I did a great deal of reflection and I talked to a number of teachers, who helped to put it in perspective. From this I drew out a much clearer sense of what was needed, plus a checklist for running a successful session.

The last three sessions got progressively better as I introduced a ball game, practised the session more beforehand, broke down exercises into several stages and counted success much more simply. In each of the fourth and fifth session I demonstrated a full technique (i.e. one that I would use in a one to one situation) which worked well in both instances.

In the last two sessions I moved away from direct experience to use case studies based on what I knew about them. This worked particularly well. The final session was structured so that they could put everything together that we had covered and really make it their own, using their own questions and words.

Evaluation methodology

There were three elements at the start of the course – the life wheel that the students completed, the mentoring skills quiz, and their desired outcomes.

These were followed up at the end of the course with a repeat of the skills quiz (though not expecting great change) an evaluation form (based on the Cheney peer mentoring training project form) and an exercise writing down key words (happiest moment, most useful part, most challenging moment, lowest moment etc).
I prepared a reflective note after each session, and drew out what had worked, and the main learning to carry forward into the next session.

At the end of the project Chris and I reviewed the whole thing from the School’s perspective.

**What Chris noticed**

Chris observed that over the six week period, there were quite noticeable differences in the girls, in who they acted as group, and how they were individually. Two in particular seemed to have gained considerably.

Observed behaviour included:
- Mixing with different people
- As a group, being found in a wider set of locations (previously they were very predictably only in certain safe places)
- One standing up to a friend in a way that she might not have done previously
- A general sense – body posture, ways of looking etc.

This is very heartening for me; until the girls completed their final evaluation forms I had very little sense of the changes, though I had noticed two girls engaging more.

**Data from Girls**

**1. Writing on cards for their boxes.**

The girls were asked to take five cards, colour coded, and write on each the moment they remembered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card title</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiest moment</td>
<td>Ball game</td>
<td>Walking into the future</td>
<td>Ball game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ball game</td>
<td>Every session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most challenging</td>
<td>Walking into</td>
<td>Asking questions</td>
<td>Walking into future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moment</td>
<td>future</td>
<td>Talking for a set time</td>
<td>Asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most fun</td>
<td>Copying</td>
<td>Ball game</td>
<td>Ball game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(rapport)</td>
<td>Choosing postcards</td>
<td>Walking into future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ball game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most useful</td>
<td>How to help</td>
<td>Learning how to ask qs to help</td>
<td>Talking about situations and solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>myself</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest moment</td>
<td>copying</td>
<td>copying</td>
<td>Being copied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stopping the ball game!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

The Ball Game – could refer to two exercises, one started in session 4, using different balls for different states, and then in 5 and 6, practising a group juggle. The “balls” are rubbery tentacly ones with lights inside that go one when they hit something.…

Walking into the future was an exercise we did at the end of the outcomes exercise, which took a bit of talking into doing, but they did do it, and it clearly made an impression!

Copying was part of the rapport session.

2. Evaluation forms summarised:
Each of the girls present at the final session filled in an evaluation form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. How did you feel about coming to these sessions?</th>
<th>fine</th>
<th>ok</th>
<th>It was an interesting experience finding out how to cope with things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Which bits did you like the most?</td>
<td>When we play the ball game</td>
<td>Liked picking postcards that suited our moods.</td>
<td>The ball game was fun because it was tricky to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to resolve/questions on a situation</td>
<td>Going into the future to give ourselves advice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What would you do differently now that you have had this training?</td>
<td>Think about what I’m doing, how other people act</td>
<td>Knowing how to ask questions to help other people</td>
<td>How I speak to people I don’t know at parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did you learn anything new about yourself?</td>
<td>Sort of – its more exciting if I’m happy and get on with it</td>
<td></td>
<td>I learnt that I’m not that confident, but I also learnt a lot about my friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If your friends were coming to this training is there anything you would like us to change?</td>
<td>nope</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How helpful (6) would you rate these sessions?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Any other comments?</td>
<td>It was fun</td>
<td></td>
<td>It was funny, I liked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In an attempt to measure learning outcomes, I also devised a mentoring skills quiz to be completed before and after the sessions. I didn’t have great expectations that this would show very much, though surprisingly it does show a small overall increase.

With such a small group though these figures are easily thrown off – for example by the very low score X gave herself for listening at the end. (Not an accurate self reflection!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Av</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to get someone else talking about themselves</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like listening to other people. People say I’m a good listener</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When people tell me about a problem I can ask questions which help them to see the issue in many different ways</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it easy to get on with a range of people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good idea how other people are feeling and reacting to me when I'm talking to them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find other people very interesting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where 5 – is all the time, 1 is never – i.e. the higher the score the better. Colour code – green – positive change, yellow- no change, red – lower score.

**What we learnt**

1. **It worked**
   The biggest learning from this for me is that it did work – despite all my concerns about the structure and lack of context; it did work for the girls, in different ways. They enjoyed it and they seemed to have learnt something that they could use!

2. **NLP Lite**
   From doing this I have learnt to boil down some really useful bits from NLP into some very simple steps that can be taught to people without any background in counselling or other listening based work. It can be taught to young people, and it could equally well be shared with teachers with an interest in listening and development. It isn’t anything particularly fancy, and is very close to simple (NLP) coaching.
3. Group or individuals?
Having started this project expecting to work with individuals and ended up working with a group, which might be best? I think this really depends on the children concerned. For a group to work probably needs a high degree of cohesion, or maturity and common purpose (e.g. a group of sixth formers acting as mentors, or really focussing on future careers and results). Otherwise you would probably make more difference on a one to one basis, if only because of the quality of attention.

4a. Context and linking matters (at least to me)
If I was doing this again in a group I would want to set the training in context, ideally a group that are mentoring others so that they have people to practice with, and are aware of issues they would like to be able to address better. Equally a group could have a common focus such as career clarity, or a possibly a theme relating to friends, getting with people, coping with conflict etc. (rather what we had this time)

4b. Being linked into the school is really important - so that feedback loops work, and the process integrated more into normal school life. This is also emphasised by others working on a one to one basis. Feed back can make all the difference to the mentor! It also allows for a more joined up approach to the child.
Case Study 3 – Gillotts School, Henley-on-Thames

Case Study for the Oxfordshire Mentoring Young People Handbook

Gillotts School

Margot Howard, with thanks to Matthew Abbott

Gillotts School is a popular, oversubscribed 11-16 school with just under 1000 students. It performs above the national average in raw terms and increasingly in terms of value added, particularly at KS4. A dip in results in 2004 provided us with the impetus for change and the adoption of the new structures outlined below. Using Hargreaves’ Gateways model, Mentoring has become one of the nine principal methods for personalising the learning of our students.

In September 2005, Gillotts School radically overhauled its pastoral structure, deliberately re-interpreting the traditional role of the tutor. This change was reflected through the establishment of Vertical Tutor Groups, the creation of six Houses (each

D and R Networks Innovation Guide, David Hargreaves
containing 150 students) and the re-positioning of tutor time in the middle of the morning.

Students comment on tutor time in the following ways:

“All students have a buddy and can talk about how the buddy supports them.” – Year 8 boy

“The buddy system is working better this year and is two-way.” – Year 10 girl

There was also a re-focus on the nature and role of tutor and recognition that the tutor is also a ‘progress manager’.

A key feature of this change was the way in which Mentoring was included in the new structure. Mentoring encompasses both academic and emotional well-being; it operates staff to student, and student to student. Margot Howard was appointed as the Gateway Leader for Mentoring at Gillotts School in 2005. In her words:

“Everyone is a mentor and has a mentoring role in school”

Aims in developing mentoring programmes

- To provide 1:1 support for all students
- To develop mentoring between students in the vertical tutor group as well as with teacher mentors
- To further the aim of developing independent, confident and autonomous learners

Mentoring Overview at Gillotts School

![Mentoring Diagram]

Development and evolution of mentoring programmes

A key feature underpinning our work with mentoring is the use of data by the tutor to enable him/her to be more directly involved in monitoring and managing, with the student, academic progress. Reporting was transformed in the following way:

1. No subject teacher writes a report – comments that they wish to make are included in the marking dialogue in the books. This supports the principle of continuous assessment and avoids the tradition of reporting at different points in the year for the different year groups.
2. Subject teachers fill in a current level and grade relating to ‘Attitude to Learning’ once a term (6 in total).

3. Each even numbered term the tutor writes a comment and sets targets in conjunction with the students. This has substantially reduced the number of written targets each teacher writes.

4. The six termly reports allow tutors to discuss progress in different subjects as well as allowing Heads of House and Margot Howard to identify students in need of mentoring and to intervene appropriately.

Using this strong base to identify students’ mentoring needs and also to target specific areas for improvement, the following strategies have been developed at Gillotts School:

- Buddy system in tutor groups with weekly focus on progress
- Additional time with tutor as part of teacher timetable
- Regular training for staff and peer mentors
- Early identification of students requiring additional mentoring in Year 9, 10 and 11
- Training of Year 10 and 11 mentors who work with Year 9 on a weekly basis in tutor time
- Understanding of smart targets
- Use of traffic lighting in subjects and revision outlines to support mentoring work done by all
- Personalised strategy sheets for effective teaching of individual students shared with all staff and updated on a two termly basis
- Additional level of mentoring by Leadership Team where little or no progress is being made

Strategies for feedback and self-evaluation

- Termly reports
- Analysis of data and progress
- Interviews with students and teachers
- Clear exit criteria

Training provided for staff/students

As with all aspects of school life, it is important to keep mentoring high on the agenda for both staff and students. To this end, there are regular meeting slots in Subject and House teams where student progress is a main focus. In addition, before working with their mentees, all Year 10s and 11s undergo a training course.

All members of staff are issued with Handbooks:

1) Mentoring Staff Handbook: outlines the procedures for mentoring and also gives strategies, making links with Emotional Intelligence and Learning Styles
2) Mentoring Revision and Exam Preparation: outlines successful strategies for planning revision, provides timetables and also examples of how to break down the process (for students and staff)

Involvement of parents

Parents are informed of the mentoring that their son or daughter is experiencing and also invited to an information evening for the relevant Year Group. Gateway Leader and Curriculum Deputy explain the processes and benefits and Core Subject Leaders provide them with further guidelines relating to information, revision and support.

Further developments

Other ideas and initiatives which we are looking to run are:

- E-mentoring (with Year 12 students from Sixth Form College)
- Use of Teaching Assistants and support staff who are all connected to a House

Links to other intervention strategies

The 2+3 Project being run by Oxfordshire LA has worked very well with the model that we have developed for mentoring at Gillotts School. In September we selected another cohort of students in Year 10 to be our 2+3 group for 2009.

Links with other areas of school development

Mentoring at Gillotts is part of a bigger picture. Our interpretation of Personalising Learning is about putting the student at the centre of his/her own education and development.
Bibliography/Resource List

- The Pupil Mentoring Pocketbook (Teachers' Pocketbooks) by Bob Garvey, Kim Langridge and Phil Hailstone (Paperback – 30 April 2006)

- Mentoring Students and Young People: A Handbook of Effective Practice (Paperback) by Andrew Miller

- Coaching and Mentoring: Practical Methods to Improve Learning by Eric Parsloe and Monika Wray (Paperback – 1 April 2000)

- Mentoring in Schools: A Handbook of Good Practice by Sarah Fletcher (Paperback – 1 October 2000)

- Mastering Mentoring and Coaching with Emotional Intelligence: Increase Your Job EQ by Patrick E. Merlevede and Denis Bridoux (Paperback – 7 June 2000)

- Implementing Mentoring Schemes by Nadine Klasen and David Clutterbuck (Paperback – 6 December 2001)


- A Handbook of Mentoring Students and Young People (Hardcover – 1 December 2005)

- Quality Mentoring for Student Teachers: A Principled Approach to Practice by Della Fish (Paperback – 22 March 1995)

- Mentors’ and Mentees’ Perceptions of ‘good’ Mentoring: A School-based Case Study by Alan Parkinson (Paperback – January 2007)

- Developing Mentorship Programs for Gifted Students (Practical Strategies Series in Gifted Education) by Del Siegle (Paperback – September 2005)


- How to Help Children Find the Champion Within Themselves by David Hemery (Paperback – 7 July 2005)
• Dealing with Disaffection: Young People, Mentoring and Social Inclusion by Tim Newburn, Michael Shiner, Sylvie Groben and Tara Young (Paperback – 1 May 2005)

• The Be-With Factor: Mentoring Students in Everyday Life by Bo Boshers and Judson Poling (Paperback – 1 March 2006)

• Mentoring Young People Makes A Difference/Ar901 (Paperback – June 1990)


• Mentoring Teens: A Resource Guide by Carol L. Miller (Paperback – 21 September 2006)

• It’s OK Being Me! Empowering Students with Emotional Intelligence at KS3 (www.behaviour-in-schools.co.uk) (www.vision-works.net)

• Becoming an Emotionally Healthy School: Auditing and Developing the National Healthy School Standard by Charlie Smith and Shall McKee (2005)

• Emotional Literacy 45 Lessons to Develop Children’s Emotional Intelligence by Jane Adams (2006)

• Games to Develop Emotional Intelligence…a series of books by Jenny Mosley and Helen Sonnet (2002)