

Interview with Dr Richard Bandler June 2005
Co-founder of Neuro Linguistic Programming
Creator of Design Human Engineering and Neuro Hypnotic Repatterning

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Q It's more than thirty years since you began creating Neuro Linguistic Programming with John Grinder. What are you most proud of out of all your many achievements?

I am most proud of my children. However, in Neuro Linguistic Programming I would say of all the work I have done, the work with Design Human Engineering is probably the most elegant and has been able to solve some of the toughest problems. Also I am most proud of the work I have done with clients, because until I came along most people never fixed a single client. If they did it was rare and now and then. My batting average is close to 100%. I have had people who have lost their sense of smell to schizophrenic, depressives and compulsives people with a whole range of problems and I have been very tenacious about making sure I found solutions for all these people. I think that is worth being proud of.

Q I think you once said that NLP skills are what are left behind once you have applied the attitudes and behaviours of NLP. Can you say a little more about this for people practicing NLP?

Actually I said the techniques are a historical trail. They are what are left behind someone who has the right attitude and methodology. To me the attitude and methodology are more important than the techniques. For example I haven't used reframing in more than 10 years and it's a sort of archaeological thing. If you are evolving then the techniques you are developing will keep developing. The phobia cure I worked with 15 years ago may have been lightening fast compared to everything else but it is still archaic compared to what I do now.

Archaeology used to take centuries but now its something that goes on in a lifetime. Because if you look at the development of computer technology in my lifetime, when I first started they would fill a 4 storey building. When IBM VAC came out it was such an innovation and now you can put that in your pocket. Everything keeps evolving at light speed. So what took centuries to do now occurs in a matter of 10 years. I think most fields need to think about how important it is to think about knowledge that way.

My interest is in applying NLP to teaching and learning. How can teachers do more to teach better?

Our greatest asset for the future is our children. We are not investing in our greatest asset. We need to pay our teachers better, train them in learning strategies, and reward them for success. After all knowledge is developing at an accelerating rate, to the point where people have to be able to learn as fast as they can. Do you have trouble with your home computer? Teachers need to teach children to learn things quickly, because by the time

you start to get a handle on this computer its going to be antiquated. We have to get people into the right state of learning only what works and not worrying about mistakes because there is no time.

The field of education has moved really slowly and they need to move much faster because knowledge has moved much faster. We have to emphasise that we have to be able to teach people very rapidly. I don't look at people as being broken but as being uneducated. I don't spend my time trying to figure out what caused a problem but how to educate them so they can go beyond it.

If I worried about the mistakes I made! What you have to worry about is what works. If something doesn't work it will keep not working for centuries, that's the thing! And defending it over an ideology is absolutely ludicrous. That is why the field of psychology was so stuck, it spent all of its time arguing over who had the right approach when none of them were successful. They were more interested in their theories than they were in the applications of those theories. I have always been more interested in the quality of life and well being of the end user that consumes my services. It's the same thing with my students; I have been more concerned wit how quickly they can learn than whether they got this particular thing right.

I figure you are always going to be up against a new situation. Every person is somewhat different than every other person. Every situation is somewhat different form every other situation. And it is the ability to adapt to the situation that makes you successful at something. It's what has distinguished students who work with me for a long time from other people. They realise that I don't do things the same way twice so there is no reason why they should.

I have just been reading a piece of research about learning styles and preferences which questions their rigour. What do you think about this?

If you teach someone you identify as visual, visually or someone who learns kinaesthetically, kinaesthetically you cripple them for life. This is the flaw, to find someone's strongest point and develop that rather than develop a whole human being. Most good learning strategies incorporate every system. You can't spell without good strong feelings, even though you may use the visual system, if you don't have a strong kinaesthetic you will spell wonderfully, but you will get all the letters wrong! The same thing is true with mathematics which is primarily auditory but again with strong kinaesthetics. Geniuses never just use one representational system. They are people who inter-mix them into sequences which are interesting and in of themselves rigorous, where they are always constantly checking one system against another system and one part of a system against another part of a system.

It isn't enough to be visual you have to be able to adjust all the submodalities in that system. It's not enough to be auditory, you have to be able to adjust all of those representations in that system and the same is true of kinaesthetic and olfactory and gustatory systems too. The more you can use all the particulars with precision, the more things you will be able to do. When people talk about learning systems no-one has been more rigorous than I have. I have been relentless for years, and all the models I have developed have been to make people relentless and rigorous. There are a lot of people who don't use them that way and just kind of apply them. They are not designed to be

used that way, they are designed for people to be very very thorough. That's why we missed Mars, twice, we weren't rigorous enough. You know! It's just not good enough. How would you like it if your surgeon wasn't rigorous? If they just cut pieces out until you feel better. It's a bad idea. It's paying attention to the detail that makes the difference that makes the difference. You chunk big and you chunk small. You can't do one or the other and be good at anything. You have to be able to jump back and forth between one and the other. So you have the big picture of what you are doing and the small picture about how to get there.

Q So that is what teachers should be teaching?

Yes! Most of the knowledge that we would convey at this point, in twenty years is going to be antiquated. It's even true about history. I learned American history and they have altered most of it. The most important thing you learn is to learn rigorously and to be able to check with an internal reference and to verify against the external reference to check whether what you are doing is working or not.

Teachers spend too much time teaching kids concepts that don't exist. Take long division, there is never anything left over in the universe. If anything is left over it ceases to exist or explodes, things are not left over. Really long division is multiplication and subtraction and we should teach people not about things that don't exist but about things that do exist. We should teach people chemistry when they are young. Chemistry is one of the most elegant things in the universe and I didn't even approach chemistry until I was in high school. I think we wait way too long. I am glad that my grandson goes to a school where they teach reading and writing when they are two years old. I didn't go to school until I was six years old and that's way too late. I didn't learn to read until I got out of school and got away from it. All they did was make me go in every day and feel bad. They never conveyed excitement about anything, school wasn't structured to make you enjoy learning it was mostly a waste of time. I had a couple of professors who were just wonderful at college and a couple of high school teachers and my fourth grade teacher was really good. But other than that most of them didn't like being there themselves. They ought to video tape the really good teachers and fire all the rest of them and make them get real jobs!

If there is a child in a teacher's class who can't read or spell, then they are the most important person in the room. If teachers say these kids can't learn because they have a learning disability, so I don't have to count them and I will only teach them second grade words then we have a problem. We don't have it right. A teacher said to me I have been doing this for 30 years, and I said and for 30 years it has not worked. So wouldn't you like to spend the next 10 years doing new and exciting things? They said No! Why should I change now? What's the risk, life becomes more interesting, and you help more people.

Q You once said to me that NLP had no future because it was a nominalisation! What would you like to have happen in the field of NLP in the next decade?

NLP is the name I gave to the activities in which I engaged. And I have been nice enough to share it with anybody else. But the idea that someone else can decide what the future can be – they ought to make up their own words. I would like to see people be a little bit more rigorous, to study for a bit longer and then really start to make the distinction about whose good and what they are good at. You are very very good at teaching teachers and

there aren't that many people who are. Most of the things I have done are on video tape but a lot of good stuff that other people have done isn't.

What I intend to do in the future is keep on taking very difficult things and just going in and finding out what little pieces work and computing what the missing pieces must be. This is always what I have done. Where D.H.E. came from was going in and taking all the pieces of NLP and mathematically computing what else has to be there and applied Neuro Hypnotic repatterning is the same. It's going in and taking all the big chunks that are there and computing what other domains have to exist. Approaching things from a whole other stand point. Every time you approach things from a different direction, if you approach them from a chemical standpoint, or a behavioural standpoint you are going to get different results and therefore different techniques and different possibilities. If you don't keep approaching things from different standpoints you will always build knowledge on top of knowledge and it will become less and less, rather than more and more.

To me there has never been a shortage of things to do. This planet is a terrible mess we need to educate people faster and a whole lot more of them. In a whole lot of new ways. In schools, on television' everywhere. In order to do it we need to develop a cadre of people. I am published in 47 languages I have had people come from hundreds of countries some of them don'tt even exist anymore and some of them I didn't know existed. There are new African nations and new eastern European nations. Its not borders that are so important, it just takes a few powerful individuals to change so many things. Years ago I came along and people worried about whether Freud was right or whether Jung was right and that's not a very good question. The truth was neither one was right because neither of them could get very far with very many clients. Now there are thousands of people all over the face of the planet that can work with phobias, manic depressives, compulsions and all because of one person. If you take that and multiply this by the other people like you and other students of mine, there are a cadre of people in other countries doing interesting things and to me that the legacy I hope to leave. This cadre of people will do new things and I am hoping that they in turn leave a cadre of people who do more new things and we can have an influence on the earth. I wish it was even more than it is.

Educational systems are still moving too slowly and businesses are still rampant with stupidity and it costs money and people employment. It doesn't make any sense. If we were more efficient and more rigorous about how we did everything. We will get greater results.