

Essential NLP - Practical Tools for a Great Life Podcast 5 - Important Questions Part 2

Hi and welcome to the Essential NLP Podcast, number 5. I'm Phil Parker, and I hope you've been enjoying the podcasts up to today. What we're going to do today is continue where we left off on the last podcast when we were looking at something called 'Well-Formed Outcomes', which is how do you start to ask questions about what people want in a way that encourages their brain to move exactly towards that goal. Last time we did the first three questions, which you can refer back to in podcast 4, today we're going to look at the next section of this fascinating way of starting to get people moving forwards, just by asking them questions.

So, where we left off we said 'What's the first step?' and we notice that each of these questions encourages the brain to start thinking about what exactly they want. The next three questions are very slightly different, but they're important questions.

The first question in this section, call it question number 4 if you wish, is 'Is the change you wish for ecological? Is it ok? Is it appropriate? Are you prepared to do whatever needs to happen for this to occur in your life?' Now what this question does (and we'll just call it the ecological question, as it's quite a big question) it gets people to just consider for a minute, what are you trying to achieve? What's it going to involve? Would that be ok for you? Is that going to fit? Is that going to work for you? Are you ready to do what's required? Sometimes what people find when they ask themselves this question is they're quite surprised to discover that they have some doubt about whether they really want this, whether they're ready to do what's needed, or whether there are some unwanted side-effects as a result.

I'll give you example; I worked with a woman once who was very overweight and she really wanted to lose weight, and I asked her this fairly obvious question 'Would it be ok for you to lose weight?' and she suddenly realised for the first time in her life that it wouldn't be ok for her to lose weight. The reason was is that she has got stuck in this dynamic relationship with her husband where because she was overweight, and he was overweight, it kind of kept a balance. If she lost weight, then she could see there might be some problems in the relationship as a result of it – if she started to be slim he might be more jealous, and so on. So she recognised that actually losing weight would cause a whole other bunch of problems. Now, what's interesting with this question is that it highlights why change hasn't happened yet, so it's a really valuable question to ask. There are some techniques we'll be looking at later in the podcasts that you can help you deal with these problems, but it's very important initially to recognise if there is an issue around here.

Also, sometimes what will happen when people ask this question, will it be ok?, is if they give a 'yes' that's very, very empowering for them, it reconnects them with their recognition they can change. If they get a 'hmmm I'm not sure, I'm not quite clear about this' that's very powerful for them as well. Not only recognising that there's some fly in the ointment of this change, but quite often just by connecting with 'Ok, I've got some issues here' it allows them to recognise what they need to deal with, and quite often by voicing these concerns it allows them to recognise that actually they can overcome these issues. So a very important question, which is – is this ecological?

So the next question is, do you want the change in all context? Now, the answer to this is normally 'Yes, of course I do' but occasionally again, people discover some clarity about what they really want.

So for example, quite often people will say 'I want to be more assertive' – Richard Bandler, one of the co-founders of NLP, says what do you call people who are assertive all the time? And the answer he says is – lonely. Because in relationships you probably don't want to be 'the assertive one', you want to actually have more flexibility, and we'll come to this later, that flexibility is one of the most important qualities you can have anywhere, it allows you to be the most that you can be. So recognising if this is a behaviour you want to have in all contexts is a really useful thing to do.

The other important point of this question is it makes you check out, in your mind, what it would be like to have that behaviour, in every single context. As you do this, you're developing new neurological pathways, and each time you do this, this strengthens your ability to access exactly these feelings, For example, the ability to be confident in all situations. To do that you'd have to scan through all situations in your mind, which your unconscious mind is brilliant at doing, and recognising how it feels to feel confident. Strengthening and building those new neurological pathways, which is exactly the point of this exercise.

Now the next question is a slightly strange one, based on everything we've talked about, about being positive and activating the neurological pathways of success, but it is a very important question. The question is 'Is there any way you could sabotage this in the future?' Now this works in two ways, first of all it creates a future where you imagine yourself being the way you want to be, and it also identifies the areas where that's going to be most tricky for you. By recognising what those key areas are, where you could trip yourself up, it gives a massive insight into exactly the areas we need to prepare you adequately for, so that when they come up you can deal with them.

So let's say you say 'I want to give up smoking'. You say it as positively as you can, and want to become somebody who's completely fine to have great choices around tobacco, and is living a healthy life. And is there any way you can sabotage that? Well, you might say 'I'm great apart from when I've had a few too many beers or glasses of wine, or if I'm with people who are consistent friendly smokers who I've smoked with over the years, then these would be my danger zones'. By recognising these, we instantly can get in there and do some work, using some of the tools that will come up later in the podcasts, to help you to make the changes there so you can be confident that even in those situations you know exactly how to behave, to activate the right neurology so you can sail through those.

So, first of all it identifies where the pitfalls are, but also it recognises all the other areas where you can do it, where you feel pretty confident that you can make these changes. Again this enhances the neurological stability of these new ways of thinking and behaving, by identifying the pitfalls and areas where you might slip up, it gives us places specifically where we need to target our work in, so it's a really useful question. Although it seems slightly negative, the purpose of it is to develop the neurological pathways and to work out where we need to work some extra magic in so you're future-proofed.

Obviously we don't want to end there because it's a slightly negative question, so the final question is 'Is this reasonable? Is the change that you want reasonable?' What this question makes us do is sift through our future, imagining ourselves here and there and with these people in this context, doing that, having that presentation, that interview, being in that pub, being in that situation, being in that environment and checking how is it reasonable to do this?

This is a very powerful question, because it makes us look at ourselves in a new way, and universally people come up with the idea 'yeah, this is reasonable, this is something I definitely can do'. It gives them a sense of power. Very occasionally if people say 'no, it's not reasonable', again this is like the ecology question earlier, it tells us right, there's something we need to look at here, and there's some skills in NLP for looking at where there are those internal conflicts, advanced techniques but really, really brilliant techniques that we'll be coming on to much later on.

So, 'Is it reasonable?' rounds off this set of questions and allows us to own the power and possibility that 'yeah, of course we can do this, this is ours, we're having this.

So I hope you've enjoyed this second half of 'Well-Formed Outcomes'. Again I recommend you start putting these into practice, start using them on yourself, with your friends who may want them, in a business context if you work in health, and you will find that little words make massive change.

Again, if you want the transcript of this, send me an email at info@philparker.org, or phil@philparker.org and please send me your comments about the NLP podcast. I hope you're finding this really useful, it's going to get more and more in-depth as we go on. If you want me to focus on anything in particular let me know, as we'll be adding some extra feedback podcasts for specific questions you may have about NLP. And until next time, use these skills, and have a great life!

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