

## Chapter 2

### This section covers:

- The History of NLP

### By the end of this section you will know and understand:

- Who the founders of modern day NLP were
- Where and how NLP originated
- The main therapists originally modelled using NLP.

### The History of NLP

NLP grew out of the Behavioural Modelling activities of John Grinder, Richard Bandler and others. John Grinder was an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz and, being in his late-twenties, was reputedly the youngest person holding such a position in the country. In 1970 a 20-year-old psychology student named Richard Bandler enrolled at the University and the pair soon became friends.

Together they studied the success rates of Virginia Satir (known as “The Mother of Family Therapy”) and Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt Therapy), analysing writings and tape-recordings to discover how Satir and Perls achieved these successful results. They soon got to know and admire Gregory Bateson, a renowned anthropologist and systems theorist who introduced them to the work of Milton Erickson.

Grinder and Bandler modelled these successful people who had achieved excellent results in assisting people to change and this was the beginning of NLP.

NLP was not developed with the intention of creating a ‘new school of therapy’; it was more a research exercise into understanding the patterns behind the work of very successful psychotherapists. As they began to come up with ideas, insights, and techniques, Grinder and Bandler tried them out on friends, including Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, Leslie Cameron-Bandler, and David Gordon. These friends swiftly joined them in developing and extending the work and this enthusiastic, highly creative group readily grew and developed NLP.

The psychotherapists that were originally modelled were:

- Dr Virginia Satir
- Dr Milton Erickson
- Dr Fritz Perls
- Dr Carl Rogers

NLP was also influenced by the work of others such as:

- Gregory Bateson
- Alfred Korzybski

## Dr Virginia Satir

Virginia Satir is referred to as "The Mother of Family System Therapy." She was concerned with the health and healing of each individual human spirit by connecting with a universal life force.

Satir has written or co-written twelve books and her first book, published in 1964, was called *Conjoint Family Therapy*. Other popular books include *Peoplemaking* (1972) and *The New Peoplemaking* (1988). She helped people to redesign their lives using a variety of techniques such as deep breathing and visualisation. She also showed how feelings of low self esteem are often hidden through different ways of communication, such as blaming and intellectualising.

In working with a client, Satir always ensured she was at their physical level, either through bending herself down or lifting a child up. Both eye contact and physical touching were important to her methods, as also was a sense of humour. She was known as a strong communicator, very aware of subtle, non-verbal cues from clients and always very careful in what words she chose to use.

Satir taught her students that people learn beliefs from their family but that as adults these beliefs may no longer be useful to the individual. Therefore being afraid to take a risk or letting fear stifle a person are ways of thinking and feeling that may no longer serve that person's best interests. Satir also set up seminars to encourage people to create more fulfilling experiences for themselves.

In the mid-1970s Bandler and Grinder modelled Satir's work and used it as one of the three fundamental models of NLP. They also collaborated with Satir to co-author *Changing with Families* (Science and Behaviour Books, 1976), which bore the subtitle: 'A Book About Further Education for Being Human.'

## Dr Milton Erickson

Milton Erickson is considered the 'Father' of modern clinical hypnosis. His "uncommon" therapy was moulded by his early research into the nature of suggestion, hypnotic states, the mental mechanisms underlying psychodynamic processes, and the psycho-physiological aspects of trance. Dr. Erickson had a pivotal realisation that, even as a hypnotherapist, he could be most effective when not using formal or directive hypnosis. The nondirective, naturalistic style he invented is called Ericksonian Hypnosis and his revolutionary psychotherapeutic approach is called Ericksonian Psychotherapy.

As a child, Erickson was stricken with polio. Having endured chronic pain as well as early dyslexia, he describes how he discovered strength and healing through self-hypnosis. Despite his affliction, he became a rugged outdoorsman and persevered with his studies through college and medical school, going on to win worldwide acclaim as an innovator in psychotherapy.

After being introduced to Erickson by Gregory Bateson, Bandler and Grinder modelled his work and this went on to form part of the foundational models for NLP. Bandler formed his own publishing company, Meta Publications, in 1975 which that

same year published *Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, Volume I*.

### **Dr Fritz Perls**

Fritz Perls was heavily involved in theatre as a teenager. He later trained as a psychoanalyst and studied with a number of respected analysts of his day. His wife Laura, who was the co-developer of Gestalt therapy, was also trained in psychoanalysis. During the First World War Perls was an assistant to the Gestalt physiological psychologist Kurt Goldstein. Perls also used to hang around the existential coffeehouses and absorbed the secular existential currents of his day, as he had during earlier years hanging around theatres.

After he repudiated psychoanalysis and moved to New York, Perls built on his theatre background by studying Moreno's psychodrama and he and Laura subsequently developed Gestalt Therapy. Paying attention to the messages of posture and movement, they drew from Laura's lifelong experience in modern dance, her knowledge of Feldenkreis and the Alexander techniques of body work. Fritz Perls further developed the technique by introducing the innovations of the "hot seat" and the "empty chair," drawing on his experience in theatre and psychodrama to bring a more active dimension to the work.

Instead of merely talking to the therapist, the client was asked to act out dialogues with one or more other significant people in his or her life, or to act out two or more sides of their self that were in conflict. In so doing, the client temporarily identifies with disowned and projected parts of the self and eventually assimilates them in an aware manner.

Bandler was deeply involved in Gestalt Therapy and modelled Fritz Perls. NLP was then born in 1975 when Grinder and Bandler published their first book, entitled "The Structure of Magic, I." In this book they presented a set of explicit tools, which could help a person achieve the excellent performance levels of therapeutic wizards such as Perls.

### **Dr Carl Rogers**

Carl Rogers originally studied for the ministry but later switched to a clinical psychology programme at Columbia University, receiving his PhD in 1931. By this time he had already begun his clinical work at the Rochester Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, where he learned about Otto Rank's theory and therapy techniques. This started him on the road to developing his own approach. In 1940 Rogers was offered a full professorship at Ohio State University and in 1942 he wrote his first book, entitled *Counselling and Psychotherapy*. In 1945 he was invited to set up a counselling centre at the University of Chicago and it was while working there in 1951 that he published his major work, *Client-Centred Therapy*.

## Activity 1 – Stages of Change

For most people, it is a process of moving from being uninterested, unaware, or unwilling to make a change (precontemplation), to considering a change (contemplation), to deciding and preparing to make a change. Genuine, determined action is then taken and, over time, attempts to maintain the new behaviour occur.

Write a short case study, with either yourself or a client as the subject, where you have facilitated change. Within the case study, identify and relate each of the stages of the model to your own particular experience.

