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The New Code of Neuro-Linguistic Programming: *A Paradigm shift in NLP*

By Chris Collingwood

B.A (psych).Grad. Cert. NLP., M.App.Sci. Social Ecology

NLP – an overview

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is an exciting new field of endeavour in the Behavioural Sciences. It focuses on detecting critical patterns of human behaviour including our observable actions in the world, our thinking processes and the organisation of our states of mind.

Patterns are what our lives are made of and consist of any repeating sequence of behaviour that, when the first part of the sequence is observed, the second part of the sequence can be predicted. For instance, before a cat pounces, it crouches down, the ears flatten and the tail waves. Then it pounces. Because we can predict that the cat is about to pounce by observing the cat crouching, we can say that we have detected a pattern.

Patterns are everywhere. There are patterns in culture, patterns in organisations, patterns in families and of course individual patterns of behaviour.

By observing these patterns NLP consultants can then build models of expertise around them to capture and achieve excellence. The concept of a model is the core element or activity of NLP and the ability to work well with one's unconscious is a mandatory prerequisite for NLP modelling.

To do this NLP consultants focus on how highly skilled, exceptional people do what they do. Notice the attention is on how rather than

why. The interest is purely in practical processes rather than historical justifications. Being able to detect how people do what they do creates possibilities and powerful leverage for achieving and excelling in personal and professional objectives through modelling.

An NLP model is a representation of an expert's skill, not a replication or duplication. There are always differences between an expert's own skill and the resulting model. Just as the map is not the same as the territory it represents, a model of expertise is not the model's approach to a skill; it is the skill itself.¹

Interestingly, and a compelling endorsement of the power of modelling, a model that is fully integrated (embodied) by the end user often produces superior results to those produced by the original expert (who was modelled).

Given this, it goes without saying that NLP's methodology has been so successful and practical that many of its models have been incorporated into management training, coaching, psychotherapy, education, sports performance and personal development. Indeed if you have attended a recent management seminar or done some form of personal development it is highly likely that you have been exposed to a range of NLP techniques.

In summary, NLP is an extremely powerful field of endeavour and can be applied to achieve excellence in both personal and professional life.

Classic Code NLP

Classic Code NLP (as it is now referred to) began in the mid 1970's when Dr John Grinder and Richard Bandler began modelling Fritz Perls, the father of Gestalt therapy. When they began the project that led to the birth of Classic Code NLP, Grinder was an assistant professor of linguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Bandler was an under-graduate psychology student.

¹ By discounting idiosyncratic elements in a model's expertise, NLP models often produce even higher grades of performance.

In the beginning, Bandler approached Grinder with a request to assist him in building an explicit model of the intuitive skills he had in applying Gestalt therapy. Bandler's ability with Gestalt therapy was unconscious. He could get results with Gestalt but did not have an explicit model of how he achieved them. Grinder modelled Bandler tacitly while Bandler applied Gestalt therapy.

Tacit modelling involves mimicking the behaviour of a model while in a 'know nothing' state until you can reproduce the skill and get the same result as the model, in a similar context within a similar timeframe².

Grinder used the patterns he had modelled, later making them explicit from his own experience. After this, Grinder and Bandler modelled other patterns from exemplars of human excellence in psychotherapy and published these. They became the first models of NLP.³

An explicit model comprises the minimum number of patterns necessary and sufficient to reproduce similar outcomes in the same class of context as the exemplar who was modelled⁴.

When Grinder and Bandler first joined forces, Bandler had modelled Fritz Perls' language patterns inadvertently, while editing tape transcripts for a book. Bandler found he could get similarly effective results with change clients to those of Perls himself, in contrast to Perls' alleged observation that his own students' results fell short. Grinder modelled Bandler implicitly until he could replicate Bandler's results. When Grinder was able to match Bandler's performance to the same level and in the same time frame he moved to the explicit stage of modelling.

² A 'know nothing' state is also known as a modelling state. It is a state in which analytical skills are put aside temporarily, so that the modeller can use their senses to attend to and take up the target skill without imposing prior knowledge or internal dialogue. This approach to modelling is similar to the way we all learned naturally as young children.

³ See Bandler and Grinder's *The Structure of Magic Volumes 1 & 2, Patterns of the Hypnotic Technique of Milton H. Erickson MD. Volumes 1 & 2* (with DeLozier), *Frogs into Princes, Trance-formations and Reframing*.

⁴ See *Whispering in the Wind* 2002 by Bostic St Clair and John Grinder. See the chapter explicating the criteria for modelling.

To make a model explicit, the modeller has to identify all the patterns of thinking, observation and execution (behaviour) that contribute to the performance and exclude all the idiosyncratic elements (those elements that, while present, do not contribute to the performance)⁵.

Bandler and Grinder then began teaching NLP to the public, with the assistance of their early students and NLP in the classic form has been taught for about 30 years. We now refer to this as Classic Code NLP. As with any field of endeavour the quality amongst trainers differs markedly depending on who trained them and over time a number of flaws have developed in the classic version of NLPs application and teaching.

Indeed, for some NLP trainers, the practice of training involves taking a recipe book approach where specific examples of previously modelled patterns are taught explicitly. The deployment of any particular pattern is made consciously, with the usual constraints of conscious attention⁶.

Concerned about feedback he was receiving regarding how NLP was being coded, practiced and taught within the NLP community,

⁵ With complex models this can be time consuming, but with Perls' language patterns it was relatively simple due to Grinder's knowledge of transformational grammar. The end result was the Meta Model of Language, a set of 13 language patterns and challenges routinely taught in comprehensive NLP training.

First Grinder identified the six patterns he modelled from Bandler along with the linguistic cues offered by clients that elicited use of the patterns. In the case of the Meta Model patterns, Grinder recognized the linguistic group to which the modelled questions belonged. When he consulted that list, it contained over 50 patterns including the six that he had modelled from Bandler. Seven more of the patterns were found to have far reaching impact on people's thinking and capacity to change and were included in the Meta Model, making the set of 13 patterns.

The Meta Model itself is the explicit model. It has been coded for transfer to others and describes classes and examples of linguistic output to be questioned and the questions to be asked. The intention of the Meta Model is to assist people to clarify, specify and restore information to their speech and thinking when it is useful for them to think, learn or communicate more accurately about anything.

⁶ Conscious attention at any one moment in time is limited to between 5 and 9 'chunks' of information. See G.A.Miller's paper "*The Magical Number Seven Plus or Minus Two; Some limits on our capacity for processing information*".

Grinder responded by working with Judith DeLozier⁷ in the first instance, and later with Carmen Bostic St. Clair⁸, to re-examine and update the Classic Code NLP. He and his partners developed a solution to the most significant problems in Classic Code NLP, resulting in what we now call New Code NLP.

New Code NLP

New Code NLP is a reorganisation and recoding of the fundamentals of NLP and the main difference comes down to emphasis, pure and simple.

Historically, the application of Classic Code NLP was oriented towards the conscious manipulation of internal representations (visual images, sounds, and sensations). There was no formal engagement of the unconscious mind. An outcome was chosen in isolation and a process implemented to shift from the present state to the desired state.

If the outcome had unfortunate consequences to the person's lifestyle, family or social system, it became clearly apparent, but only after the event.

Engaging the unconscious has benefits

It is useful to engage the unconscious mind when choosing outcomes and resources. The unconscious has access to a greater range of possibilities than the conscious mind. According to the cognitive scientist and linguist George Lakoff, 95% of our thought occurs outside conscious awareness.⁹ The unconscious mind

⁷ One of the first new code of NLP seminars was DeLozier and Grinder's Prerequisites to Personal Genius, taught in San Francisco in 1986. The seminar was transcribed and edited into their book *Turtles all the Way Down; Prerequisites to personal genius*.

⁸ See their book *Whispering in the Wind*, 2002, which contains a major section on the New Code. The book examines NLP epistemology in depth and distinguishes between NLP modelling, NLP application and NLP training. This is a seminal book in the field and one of the most important NLP books written in recent years.

⁹ See *Philosophy in the Flesh; the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Quoting Lakoff and Johnson "The cognitive unconscious is vast and intricately structured. It includes not only our automatic cognitive operations, but also all our implicit knowledge. All of our knowledge and beliefs are framed in terms of a conceptual system that resides mostly in the cognitive unconscious p.13". Recent work in embodied cognition fits nicely with models already developed in NLP and especially in New Code NLP.

works with patterns, in metaphor and can consider multiple time frames, logical levels and perceptual positions. The unconscious mind has the capacity to imagine future scenarios and include likely consequences. It can deliver intents, solutions and many other resources to consciousness and carries information from all our experience.

When we engage the unconscious mind in forming outcomes and choosing resources, the ensuing change respects the person's ecology¹⁰.

In this context ecology considers the broader scope of possible consequences (benefits and costs) of any action, including change. When we include consequences, we can test resources before the change and ensure the entire well-being of the person and the systems in which they operate. Unfortunate consequences are identified early on, before any action is taken, so that the process can be altered to fit the needs of the person.

In the early days when Classic Code NLP was developed, there was explicit reference to the unconscious mind but no formal means of engaging with it. This has been rectified in New Code NLP. Indeed it is an essential element of New Code NLP¹¹.

The importance of framing (conscious involvement)

One of the roles of conscious attention is the art of framing. Framing defines the context to be examined and / or the desired outcome to be considered. Framing identifies the parameters within which the unconscious will operate to make links and develop resources.

¹⁰ The study of the relationships and interactions between living organisms and their natural or developed environment.

¹¹ In most classic code training, reference is made to the unconscious mind via the related field of Ericksonian Hypnosis. When this is the case, methods for engaging the unconscious mind typically involve hypnosis. While the psychiatrist Milton H. Erickson's work provided many essential patterns to NLP, his particular application has created an erroneous perception that NLP "is" a therapeutic modality. Thus, most classic trained NLP practitioners can only work with a person's unconscious mind using hypnotic methods. In the new code there are formal patterns for engaging unconscious processing without resorting to hypnotic trance. This enables people trained in the new code to apply the benefits of NLP to themselves, naturally and independently and to use it in contexts where a hypnotic style would not fit. One of the features of the new code is that it supports self-application of NLP patterning.

Everything we do, all of our behaviour occurs and applies in a particular context or set of contexts. We may not be conscious of most of the contexts in which we are functioning, however, the context where we are at any moment sets the scene for the way we behave there.

Arranging unconscious selection of resources

A person wanting to bring about a change can consult their unconscious mind about consciously identified proposals and possible resources for achieving their outcome. Initially they can learn to develop a formal signal system with their unconscious. As their acuity develops, they recognize naturally occurring bodily signals as communications from the unconscious.

This form of communication enables a person to propose courses of action to their unconscious mind. When the unconscious disagrees, the person can change their approach, gather more information, research the frame and context or take action as they see fit. They are forewarned that pursuing the original proposal will be incongruent and therefore open to unfortunate consequences. Equally, an affirmative response from the unconscious indicates that the proposed action will be taken congruently, thereby increasing the likelihood of functional consequences.

To illustrate this point – recent work with one of Australia’s most successful derivative traders enabled us to build a model of how he made effective trading decisions. He has what is known as natural signals. A potential trade either ‘feels right – so make a trade’, ‘does not feel right – so don’t make a trade’ or feels ‘something is missing – I need to do more research’.

To understand this more fully, it is useful to conduct a simple thought experiment. Can you remember a time when you made a decision that felt right for you? Take a few moments to relive the experience. It can be useful to wrap the memory around you as if you are back in time then and there.

Note what it felt like in your body when something feels right for you. Now shake that memory off and for contrast find a time when a

proposal of some sort did not fit for you. Note how that felt in your body.

In those examples you did not consciously create the feelings 'fit' or 'doesn't fit'. Those particular feelings were the end product of considerable thought processing, much of which occurred outside conscious awareness. Those feelings that you had were examples of what we refer to as natural signals that are generated by your unconscious mind. The trader was 'unconsciously competent' and our task in modelling this person's expertise was to elicit the critical patterns of thinking that formed making a trading decision, which we did to his delight and our pleasure.

As communication with the unconscious mind develops, it may progress naturally from "yes", "no" and "don't know," type responses through to a state where fully formed ideas are offered to the conscious mind in response to proposals and questions. The intent of New Code NLP is to recognise adeptly when the unconscious mind uses this route to communicate in response to conscious queries.

The inclusion of intention/s and consequences

The concept of 'Intention' was first identified when Grinder developed the Six Step Reframe¹², a pattern used for changing behaviour and states.

Six Step Reframing can be applied to any defined pattern. By including intention the scope of possibility increases when desired outcomes are considered. For example, "What do I want? And what do I want it for"?

When applied in a well-formed outcome this question raises the possibility that the original outcome may not lead to the most effective result. The intent for an outcome allows multiple options to be considered or the intent itself to become the outcome.

¹² Again see *Whispering in the Wind* and refer to the chapter on the Breakthrough pattern, which documents the development of Six Step Reframing.

An indicator of the likely ecology in an outcome is a match between the consequences of achieving the outcome and the intent for pursuing it. Grinder has expressed concern about the lack of ecology in the use of Classic Code patterns when used to pursue outcomes in isolation from the rest of the subject's life. Grinder's outcome, intention and consequences model addresses that issue¹³.

Emphasizing state rather than behaviour in NLP

New Code NLP attends to a person's changing state instead of replacing one behaviour directly with a single, different behaviour. A change in state leads to a range of different, naturally occurring behaviour. Instead of replacing one behaviour with another in a context, an appropriately framed context can be used to elicit a suitable state, which enables a range of possible, appropriate behaviour to manifest. When the state is associated with the context, the client can alter their behaviour spontaneously in response to the conditions they find there.

Change processes with New Code NLP often use content-free high performance states. These can be associated with one or more contexts in cases where a client wants more choice or a specific outcome.

If I wanted to improve my performance when negotiating, one way would be to review a specific example and mentally rehearse an alternative way of behaving. Alternatively, I could use a new code process to develop a "content free" high performance state which is then associated (linked) to the context for the negotiation. Having done this, the next time I was in that context I would discover new behaviour that supported the process of negotiation. Through the high performance state I automatically generate the necessary behavioural resources to improve my performance in each future

¹³ A few years ago we organised a training seminar with John Grinder and his partner Carmen Bostic St Clair where we detected a pattern John was using. Repeatedly over the 3 days, he had various people consider a desired outcome, the intention they held for that outcome and the projected likely consequences of achieving that outcome in its particular context. It is useful to remember that all outcomes create consequences, some useful and desirable and some not. Knowing what you want something for (an intention) opens up the scope for identifying alternative that would meet that intention.

negotiation situation. Using appropriate states is a creative and generative approach to making productive and effective change.

Features of a new code approach to teaching NLP

Teaching New Code NLP requires deep unconscious familiarity with the patterns to be offered, combined with fluency in chunking, perceptual position shifting and the language of process instructions. A trainer needs to be able to offer experiential discovery exercises in which the intended pattern is presupposed, having demonstrated the pattern at intervals, covertly, throughout the training. This approach precludes conscious interference, spurious meaning or comparison with prior knowledge.

Comprehensive New Code NLP training produces graduates who think in NLP patterns, ask penetrating questions and communicate naturally and elegantly in their own style. This approach to training is minimalist, code congruent and process and discovery oriented. Minimalism strips away non-essential material (content), ritual and artificial aids from the training context.

Code congruence in training requires maximum similarity between training and assessment with reference to context, process, resources and material, in the interest of facilitating learning and performance¹⁴. Code congruence in disseminating learning to life requires the training to blend with life as much as possible and to maintain that connection through each exercise.

New Code NLP training uses experiential discovery exercises. The training room has freedom of entry and exit, natural light and direct links to the outside. The New Code approach requires students to converse in their own words in as natural an environment as possible, using process instructions as their frame for each exercise.

Framing for conscious attention and metaphor for unconscious attention

¹⁴ If teaching or learning is experiential, then the testing should be experiential also. If students are given reading then a written test is appropriate. We test people in the same form or code in which they have learnt. This is referred to as code congruence.

As discussed earlier, framing is essential to New Code NLP training and is all about context. Everything we do, all of our behaviour occurs and applies in a particular context or set of contexts. We may not be conscious of most of the contexts in which we are functioning, however, the context where we are at any moment sets the scene for the way we behave there. In the world, a context is the situation, time and place that informs what we do. Our internal states too, are part of our context and also inform our actions in the world. A context is the set of constraints and supports that cue our states and behaviour while inside it.

Framing is the art of setting the boundaries for a communication or interaction. Framing defines the context¹⁵. Framing can also apply to the way we organise ourselves to do something. The frame we place on a context defines how we do what we do and how we live our lives. The framing model is one of the most important and influential models of NLP.

The intent of framing is to facilitate students to discover patterns of excellence for themselves through exposure to training exercises, experiences and games. Also for students to experience an unconscious uptake of generative patterns of excellence. This is evidenced by the questions they ask, the behaviour they offer and the links they make. The intent for unconscious uptake is to prevent students from making conscious links between what they think they are learning and what they know already that they think relates to it. Ideally, students learn unconsciously, then allow the patterns to generalise and be expressed unconsciously until sometime later, the student starts to gain conscious awareness.

In contrast, conventional learning expects the conscious mind to learn before a skill or topic becomes available unconsciously. This is hard work and allows conscious ideas and opinions to filter new information before it is experienced. This is limiting. Learners want to be able to respond with NLP patterns, not talk about them.

¹⁵ In recent years the art of framing has entered into the political arena due to the influential book by George Lakoff, *Moral Politics*. We now hear politicians in Australia, especially the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, talking about frames and framing. The politician or party who has the best frames and skills for framing the agenda has a clear advantage.

Therefore, participants are asked to complete discovery exercises without knowing what their purpose is in advance. They are given clear process instructions with no reasoning.

New Code NLP trainers, practitioners and consultants use framing extensively before beginning to teach a pattern or intervene with a client. It can be presupposed that the unconscious has access to all our resources; and there are times when we run out of ideas. At those times the unconscious mind needs a frame of reference on which to base the search for resources that fit the particular situation. For the conscious mind, the discovery method favoured in New Code NLP does not provide meaning in advance and conscious minds like meaning.

Framing provides enough meaning, albeit different from the covert intent of the exercise, to enable participants' conscious minds to participate in a useful manner. That is, to perform the overt task of the exercise.

Content-free high performance states

Another aspect of the New Code approach to training and coaching is in the use of activities and games to develop content-free high performance states in participants. Once elicited, these states can be applied to any context where someone wants to enhance their performance. These high performance states are referred to as 'content-free' as they arise as a by-product of the game or activity. They manifest in the present, thereby avoiding the use of sense memory as a source of resources for high performance. In effect, they are uncontaminated by specific memory content.

The use of content-free high performance states leads to more robust changes and better generalizations of those changes into people's lives. It is also congruent with the idea that ethical application of NLP be content-free. It avoids any risk of imposing consultants' values on their clients, which is a serious drawback of content oriented models, for example conventional psychotherapy, counselling or management consulting.

Getting NLP back on track; reorienting to patterning and modelling

With the exponential growth of people teaching the developed models and applications of NLP to business, coaching, therapy, education, personal development etc., there has been very little attention accorded by NLP trainers to modelling, in general, and the development of new models, in particular.

Much of what is promoted as new models is simply a crafty repackaging of existing NLP models into applications of NLP. In fact most of the NLP books published in recent years are simply variations on standard NLP themes. As Grinder said in an 1996 interview:

"One of the expectations which I personally carried at the time of discovery and development of NLP was that people interested in our work would cleanly make the distinction between NLP and applications of NLP. My hope at the time was that given this distinction, there would arise a group of committed men and women who would recognize the meta levels tools which we had either discovered (the Milton Model.....), or created (the verbal patterns of the Meta Model or Precision Model, Representational Systems....), and go out and identify and create new models of excellence to offer the world. This has not happened and is very disappointing to me. NLP is popularly represented and commonly practiced at least one logical level below what it was clearly understood to be at the time by Bandler and me."¹⁶

New Code NLP corrects this consequence with an explicit reorientation back to the core skills of NLP Modelling.

A consequence of Classic Code NLP teaching and learning is that the material becomes formulaic through packaging as techniques in either recipe or scripted form. This results in practitioners who are really merely NLP technicians, nothing more. They can only express NLP through the formatted techniques that they have been given, without an appreciation of the underlying NLP patterns. Unless they can gain the patterns experientially, they will remain

¹⁶ This excerpt is from an interview conducted by Jules and Chris Collingwood in 1996 published in full at <http://www.inspiritive.com.au/grinterv.htm>

technicians and be limited to the ritualised techniques they were taught in their NLP training.

Unfortunately, even ritualised NLP makes a discernible difference to the quality of people's lives, so continues to attract many students who are then led to believe they have learned the genuine article. This leads to another consequence; the development of perceptual filters¹⁷ that preclude the likelihood of discovering the patterns of NLP. If you know it all already (and your trainer has anchored credibility), why would you "repeat" what you have finished learning?

The New Code NLP approach to teaching and learning involves creating a context or series of contexts within which the target patterns are demonstrated, with multiple descriptions¹⁸.

Students who learn to attend to the detection and utilization of patterns in self and others develop artistry in their use of NLP. They have behavioural flexibility and can respond creatively in any context, applying existing patterns in multiple ways while also developing new material.

Summary of differences between Classic Code NLP and New Code NLP

A useful way of thinking about the difference between New Code NLP and Classic Code NLP is in terms of emphasis.

Classic Code NLP emphasizes technique, mechanistic metaphors and the production of NLP technicians. It uses conscious explicit models that are often divorced from their original context. "Where do I use this technique" and "How do I know which technique to use" are common questions from Classic Code NLP students and

¹⁷ Perceptual filters are those ideas or beliefs an individual carries, based on past learning and experience, that organize, and in some cases distort, what is perceived in a given context. Our perceptual filters are an imposition that we project onto the world. For example if you believe that politicians are inherently dishonest, then this would bias your perception of politicians and the meaning you would attribute to their presentations. A liberal and a conservative voter in the US will perceive and filter a speech by the President of the United States in different ways from each other, based on their political leanings.

¹⁸ Read DeLozier and Grinder's *Turtles all the Way Down; Prerequisites to Personal Genius* and Bateson's *Mind and Nature; a Necessary Unity*, for rich explanations of the concept of multiple descriptions, referred to as "Double description" by Bateson.

practitioners. There is a tendency for classic code practitioners to try to fit clients to procedures, instead of creating interventions with each client.

In stark contrast, New Code NLP emphasizes the relationship between the conscious and unconscious minds of the individual, their relationships with others and their relationship with the world. It works towards the personal evolution of the participant.

New Code NLP promotes unconscious competence, which will be demonstrated and followed by conscious appreciation. Training drills are used in service to pattern incorporation and the development of unconscious competence.

The balance between the conscious and unconscious minds is paramount and this is known as the conscious / unconscious interface. New Code NLP is directed towards the detection and utilisation of patterns in the world, with an emphasis on patterns.

A New Code NLP practitioner often creates a process spontaneously in response to a particular context. In this evolved code, participants explore psychological states and learn to recognise, inventory and change states. This work connects with the development and incorporation by each participant of a modelling state. A modelling state is a state of mind for modelling excellence. Another aspect of New Code NLP is attention training (essential for modelling). That is learning where and how you place your attention, how that relates to state, perceptual position and context.

Grinder and DeLozier and later Grinder and Bostic St Clair developed New Code NLP as a second, greatly evolved description of Neuro-Linguistic Programming to create a system for learning NLP that fosters the development of systemic wisdom in the participant¹⁹.

¹⁹ Read more about New Code NLP by referring to *Turtles All the Way Down; Prerequisites to Personal Genius* by Judith DeLozier and John Grinder and *Whispering in the Wind* by Carmen Bostic St Clair and John Grinder.

The new NLP qualification, the Graduate Certificate in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, is taught based entirely on the New Code NLP.

Author

Chris Collingwood is an NLP Trainer, NLP modeller, management consultant and Director of Inspiritive Pty Ltd. He is the co-author along with Jules Collingwood of The NLP Field Guide; a reference manual of practitioner level patterns. He has over thirty years experience in coaching, consulting and leading seminars in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Chris is also a Principal of Adept Executive Solutions, a management consultancy providing services to corporate and government clients, around modelling expertise and expert performance to capture and maintain this within the organisation.

Chris's background includes extensive training with developers of NLP, including Dr. John Grinder, the renowned co-originator of Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Chris is an NLP trainer, certified by Dr. John Grinder.

Chris holds a Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems, a BA degree in Psychology, a Graduate Certificate in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and a Masters degree in Applied Science Social Ecology. He has been exploring Neuro-Linguistic Programming since 1980.

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Chris Collingwood
www.inspiritive.com.au
M: +61 425 298 176 | L: +61 2 9698 5611 | Chris@inspiritive.com.au

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