

Pain Management Using NLP

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Introduction

The one question that people seem to ask more than any other is “how do I stop pain?” I’ve come across several techniques that work very effectively and thought it would be useful to share these techniques.

Cautions and contraindications

Before going any further, please note that pain is a warning system. If someone is in pain, then something is wrong.

Before using either of these techniques, get the cause of the pain checked out by a doctor.

The techniques

There are three techniques I use regularly. The first two are very fast and use built in tests to determine whether I need both. I usually use ‘slight of tongue’ to mention the ‘discomfort you had’ or ‘that problem you had an issue with’ rather than mentioning pain. After all, the word ‘pain’ is a powerful anchor and you clients will have a well used strategy for responding to it.

I usually start with the ‘box’ technique (David Taylor told me about this and it works in 90% of cases) and move swiftly to the colour method should any part of the discomfort still remain. Confidence is the name of the game with these techniques and they usually work very quickly (the whole process takes less than 5 minutes!).

The last technique utilises trance and is somewhat more complex – but it is a standard technique in the NLP community (Richard Bandler teaches this on his NLP courses). I include it here for completeness.

Pain management transcripts

The box

Firstly, I’d like you to imagine, visualise or simply pretend that the discomfort you came here with is in a box. Pop a box around the outside of it and let me know when you’ve done that – actually, I don’t care if it’s a solid box or just a wire-frame; let me know when you’ve done that.

Good. Now, Check the outside of the box and make sure that it’s *all clear now*, ok? Now, check the inside and make sure it’s *all contained now*.

Ok, yes?

Excellent! Now, squish the box down a bit [I make a suitable ‘squashing a box’ action with my hands here at the same time]. Make it a little smaller and let me know when you’ve done that.

Good. Now, check the outside – *it’s all clear, yes?*

Good, Now check the inside – *all contained now?*

Ok, now squish the box down a little more.

[Repeat a couple of times, checking the outside and inside with 'all clear now' and 'all contained now' as questions]

Great, you're really doing well now – keep going until you get it down to the size of a stock cube and let me know when you've done that.

Ok, so now that you've done that, keep going until you've got it all the way down to the size of a pin-head [Some people comment that this is now really focussing the pain, so you might need to say something to the effect of 'nearly done now, keep going and you'll be fine']. Let me know when you've done it.

Great – Now it's really small, yes?

So small in fact that we could just go 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... and [click fingers] let it go. Yes? Now, let's do that ... ready ... 1 ... 2 ... 3 [click fingers].

All gone now?

[If not completely gone, move straight on to the next technique]

What colour is the discomfort you had?

I'd like you to notice the colour of the area where the discomfort was. Going now to that area, if *it had a colour*, what colour would you say it was?

[This client reported that the colour was 'red', you client may report something different, change the following as necessary]

Ok, so let's look at an area that's just fine. Now, what colour would you say that is?

[The client reported 'blue' at this stage. Again, change the following as necessary].

Great, what I'd like you to do now is, in your minds' eye, dip a paintbrush in that OK colour – that nice normal blue. Take that colour now and start to paint around the edges of the red areas until, little by little, each bit of red turns blue. Just the edges though, we don't want to do it all yet, don't we?

Great, so now that we've done that, make sure you've got those areas exactly the same colour, texture – you can even check the sound, if has one. Make sure it's completely OK in that area, ok, yes?

Ok, in that case, you can paint the rest now. Notice how the sensations change as you do it and let me know when it's all Ok now.

Trance utilisation

I use this for longer-term pain management or those going through a series of medical procedures. For this, ensure that you understand the consequences of utilising pain management techniques and seek qualified medical approval before starting.

This technique utilises a trance state and you should ensure you have somnambulism before proceeding.

Establish communication with the part that controls those uncomfortable sensations and set up an ideomotor response with it. Seek permission to talk directly with that part and ask it whether it is willing to talk with you through the ideomotor signal chosen. Usually, I leave it to the client to provide two distinct signals (one for yes, one for no) – sometimes, I choose to ask the client to tell me the responses.

Ask that part “can you think of one other way of letting you know when that area needs attention but without all that negative discomfort that you were experiencing before we started?” or a similar question. If no, rephrase or install suggestions that still fulfil the positive intention of that part and allow it to choose one other method of letting the client know where the problem was. Note that I consider the word ‘pain’ to be black-listed throughout all of this work.

Once the ‘part’ has indicated that it has one other method, suggest that “if there is one other way, can you think of a second better way?” and obtain a ‘yes’ response or install further suggestions until the part indicates that it can think of another way.

Proceed with “well now, if there’s one way and another way. Now you know there are lots of ways of dealing with this without all of those negative side-effects. Can you choose one way that still fulfils your needs but without all that discomfort?”.

Following a yes response, ask that part if it’s willing to try using these new techniques until it finds one that it’s happy to use. Perhaps a tingling sensation or a warm feeling around the affected part will suffice. Usually you get a yes response at this stage – if not, determine the positive intent of that part and reframe to demonstrate how the ‘old sensations’ were causing muscle tension, loss of sleep, headaches (or whatever the presenting symptoms were) and the new techniques will make life better.

Finally, ask that part to start utilising those techniques from now on. Thank the part for talking to you and start talking to the client. Ask the client whether he/she is happy to start using these new techniques and, following a ‘yes’ response, end the trance session bringing back good feelings and a positive healthy future.