

Can't find time?

If you could, literally find time, where would it be?

Excuse me, have you got time to . . . ? How many times have you heard this and not had the time? Interesting, isn't it? We talk about time as if it were a commodity that you can dish out at will.

There is no doubt that we are sophisticated creatures when it comes to handling time. For other animals, time just passes with the sunrise or sunset. Animals live in the moment, with no conscious plan for the future. In contrast, we have evolved a unique mechanism that allows us to travel back and forth in time in our minds. Pause for a moment and think about the last really important thing that happened to you . . . amazing how easy it is for you to find yourself 'back in the moment' or imagining an event that hasn't even happened, isn't it?

As we discussed in earlier articles, at the heart of NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) is the idea of 'modelling' the excellence in other people and applying it to ourselves. From this perspective, we can come to understand how time operates, then improve our ability to use our amazing 'time talents'. All of us who teach create schemes of work or other time-related plans. Those of you who teach any historical concepts will be familiar with the notion of timelines – where events, past or future, are placed on a line in order to make them comprehensible. The interesting question is where does this idea of a line of time come from and why does it feel so natural? NLP modelling has identified two ways in which people process time. Understanding these methods provides a unique and powerful tool for self-development, goal achievement and much, much more.

Find your natural 'time processing pattern'

As you follow the exercises opposite, you can begin to become aware of how your mind creates a virtual space around you, where your 'time thoughts', past and present, are stored. People tend to have one of two distinct types of time processing as their natural preference. Amazingly, you have the power to choose between these and can even change your perception of time events within them. Have you ever asked a pupil a question and seen them stare off into space before they

You can do it!

And it's about time

Richard Churches and **Roger Terry** explore some of the fascinating things that NLP says about a subject close to all our hearts

come back to you with the answer? This is no coincidence – they are accessing their storage of that memory (a picture, a sound or a feeling).

Find a comfortable quiet place and imagine, create or feel the space around you. Next think of a happy time in the past: teenage years are good, a birthday or special event perhaps. As you recall this, notice where in the space around you that memory would be as if you could reach out and touch it. Remember this location. Now follow the same process for an event one or two years in the future: like Christmas or your birthday. You now have two points. Join them together with an imaginary line and you will have discovered your preferred time processing. You will find that you have identified one of two patterns. In NLP we call these ‘in time’ and ‘through time’. Each of these patterns has different behavioural characteristics and a different sense of internal state associated with it.

‘In time’

This is any configuration whereby the line in your mind passes through your body. Usually with this pattern your recollection of the past is ‘behind you’ and imagination of the future is ‘in front’ (figure 1). A person with this pattern will tend to feel their experience fully in the present.

‘Through time’

‘Through time’ is any configuration where the time line is not through the body, usually with the past on one side and the future on the other (Figure 2). From this perspective, all of your life appears laid out in front of you.

One way to double-check someone’s preferred timeline is to ask the person to think of a single happy memory. This can be quite difficult for someone with a ‘through time’ preference, as they may tend to group or cluster their memories by type when accessing them. For an ‘in time’ preference person, it is much easier to access single memories by type, as the nature of their preferred time processing pattern leads them to experience time in single episodes. A bit like rolling a tape backwards and forwards but only hearing one moment at a time.

Fun with your timeline

Awareness of your preference is a powerful thing. You can choose to change your timeline and adopt an alternative pattern for a particular moment, or period of time. In doing so, you can take on the characteristics of your non-preference. This is easy – just image your preferred timeline and watch it move. You may find it helpful to visualise your timeline on the floor and watch it turn in a new direction. If you have an ‘in-time’ preference remember to step back off your timeline. If you

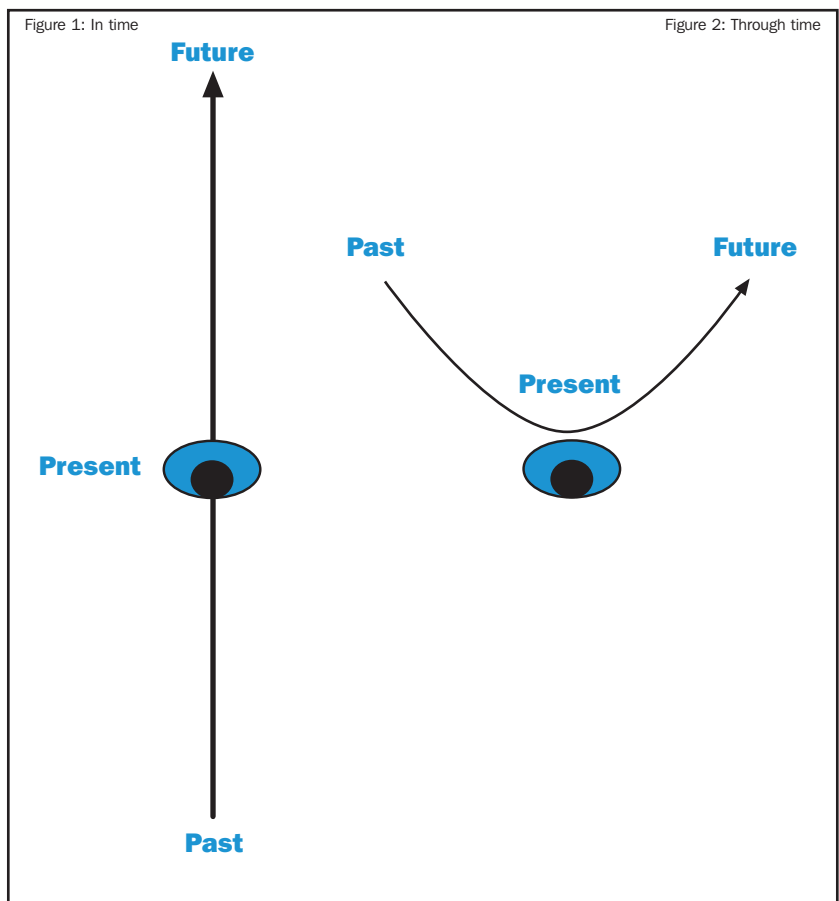
Characteristics of people with each type of time processing pattern

‘In time’

- can get caught up in ‘the here and now’
- may have part of their history unavailable to them unless they imagine turning their heads to look behind them
- sees memories through their own eyes (rather than as a photograph)
- likes to have options ‘in the moment’
- may need to be kept on track, or set themselves artificially early deadlines to ensure completion
- work and play are synonymous

‘Through time’

- time is perceived as continuous and uninterrupted
- memories often are dissociated (as if looking at a photograph)
- are on time and feel they ‘know time’ well
- often cluster single memories and associate them with an internal state (eg may find it hard to think of a single happy memory at first, because all the happy memories are grouped together)
- good at staying on track
- less ability to focus in the present and ‘be here, now’
- has a need for closure and to ‘get the show on the road’
- work and play are separate areas



have a ‘through time’ preference, remember to literally ‘step into’ the present and see the future directly ahead.

Re-orientating your timeline can particularly benefit ‘through time’ people, who may need to develop better listening skills. ‘In timers’ are great listeners, as they find it easy to be in the ‘here and now’. Conversely ‘in time’ people may benefit from the long-term planning perspective that they can achieve by adopting a ‘through time’ perspective.

Achieving goals with confidence and ease

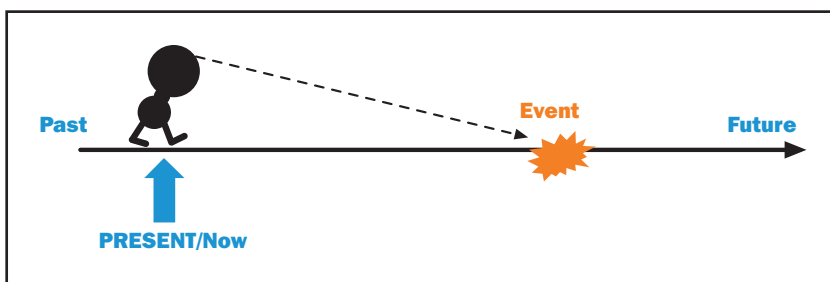
You can also use your timeline to help you to set and achieve goals and to overcome barriers and challenges. Two really powerful tools that you can explore are given below. These tools can also be used when supporting children: in revision, goal setting and coping with examination worries.

Tool 1 – Walking around anxiety

Do you have something coming up in the future that you are anxious about? For example, qualifications, a parent/teacher conference, interviews etc. If so, then this is a really useful tool to use.

Step 1

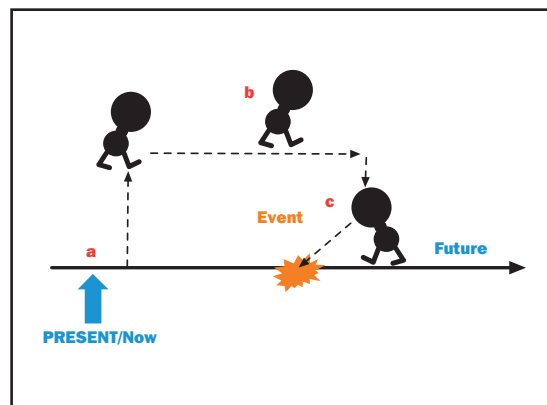
First, imagine that your timeline is laid out on the ground. Position the past behind you, the future in front of you. Make sure that you are standing on your timeline at the point that represents ‘now’ for you. Decide where, on the future part of your timeline, the event that you are anxious about lies and notice how you feel about it. What are you saying to yourself? What emotional feelings and physical sensations do you have? Where in your body are any physical feelings and sensations located?



Step 1

Step 2

Next, take a step to one side of your timeline and walk towards the future until you are past the event in question. Step back onto your timeline (at a point in the future), looking back toward the event, as if it is something that you have already achieved. Notice how your feelings change when you reconsider the event from the point of view of already having achieved it.



Step 2

Step 3

Finally, walk back along your timeline to ‘now’ and look at your chosen event again. Notice how your anxiety has decreased. You might want to score this on a scale of one to ten and become aware of how much it has reduced. You can repeat this process until you are completely comfortable with the level of your anxiety, or until you find that you are now looking forward to the event with more positive feelings or simply in a matter-of-fact way.

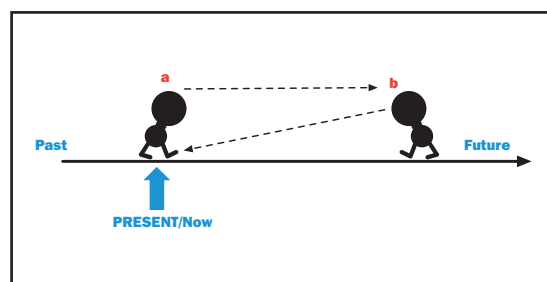
Tool 2 – ‘Walking your timeline’ and adding resources

Firstly

Imagine what you want to happen. Do this in detail, in full SENSORAMA. Create a picture in your mind. See everything as if you were really there. Make the colours bright, clear, in focus and all around you. Next, begin to be aware of the feelings and sensations in your body. Begin to create good feelings about the event and allow them to fill your body. Make sure you have fun doing this. As you generate these feelings, notice what sounds are also there. Adjust the volume and decide on the location of the sounds. Hear the event in full stereo (or even surround-sound) rich and full. What smells and tastes can you sense?

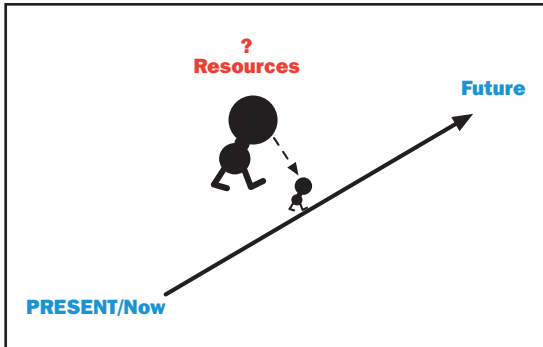
Secondly

Imagine where in the room your goal can be found. Walk to that point and look back at where you started from, noticing what it feels like to have achieved your goal (see below).



Thirdly

Return to 'now' on your timeline and begin walking forwards (you can do this physically or just in your own mind). Imagine all the things that you will do and overcome. At some point you will feel the need to pause, as you begin to experience a barrier or potential challenge. At this point, step off your timeline (as shown below) and look at yourself in the situation, as if you were an observer.



Think of all the internal or external resources (including people) that you need to use as you overcome the challenge. Once you have completed this, imagine taking these resources back onto the timeline with you. Notice how different your challenge now appears. Continue walking on your timeline towards your goal and repeat the second stage as often as you need to, in order to reach your goal.

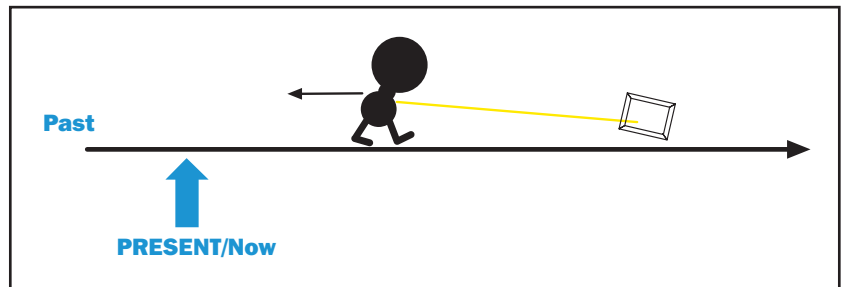
Fourthly

Once you are standing on your goal again, imagine it as a beautiful picture and hold it in front of you. Imagine all the details (what you will see, hear and feel) as you achieve your goal. Finally, pull a golden thread from the picture and connect it to your heart. Take four deep breaths and breathe life into your goal.

Finally

Drop the picture onto your timeline, leaving the thread connected and walk backward seeing the

thread extend as you go. Continue walking backwards, only as fast as you need to collect all your internal resources. Do this until you find yourself back at your 'now' point. Notice how motivated, and connected you now are to your goal and how positive you feel.



It can be good to have someone facilitate this with you. This can be done at a purely process level (with you keeping the details to yourself) so that your facilitator remains unaware of exactly what you are working on. **TEX**

Roger is an NLP Master Trainer. His company, Evolution Training, offers training in NLP at Diploma, Practitioner and Master Practitioner level. Roger also trains hypnosis and change management.
roger@evolutiontraining.co.uk



Richard is a senior consultant with CfBT Education Trust and an NLP Master Practitioner. He is the Lead Consultant for the DfES Fast Track teaching programme, Managing Editor for the NPQH materials and Lead Consultant for two London Leadership Strategy workstreams.
rchurches@cfbt.com



NLP for Teachers

Teaching Expertise

15th November 2006 & 12 January 2007 – BSG House, London

A 1-day training programme with Richard Churches and Roger Terry

Take the first step on an amazing journey into the world of NLP with the country's leading practitioners of applied NLP

Cost £249 plus free subscription to TEX • Special TEX subscriber rate £229

Call 020 7954 3406 to reserve your place at this event

