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I Love Your Criterial Equivalences

Distinctions and comparisons

The basic building blocks of human experience are the modalities, and this is in essence what I think NLPers mean when they explain the “neuro” part of NLP. It is impossible to think in any way other than in the modalities. The design of the brain allows us to become aware of any content of experience *exclusively* in the form or language of the modalities. The implications are therefore that the fundamental information used by the brain in making the distinctions and comparisons, which are a prerequisite for recognizable awareness, are the modalities. In the world of NLP, the “equivalences” qualified as “complex” (when they refer to the experiential meaning/coding of words) and “criterial” (when they refer to the experiential meaning/coding of criteria) refer to the building blocks of human experience, namely the modalities. It is through these V-A-K “equivalences” that people know that they know, and through which they recognize the content and meaning of their experiences. The carrier of “knowing” and “meaning” does not lie in the linguistic representation of our reality, but in the V-A-K equivalences to which language constructs refer to.¹

For example, when listening to criteria words in a conversation, a NLPer realizes that what is deleted is the context specificity of the criteria and the way of recognizing the criteria in experience. When a person refers to “trust” as an important value in a relationship, one cannot help but open one’s meta-model toolbox and wonder “which relationship specifically?” and “how specifically?” When working with their values, my clients are always a bit surprised to discover how the meaning and the experiential recognition/evidence of trust differs in different kinds of relationships: the same word has different equivalences in experience as the context or “kind” changes.

The significance of testing against one’s own equivalences as a way of knowing also has crucial interpersonal implications. In South Africa