

Secrets of Changing Minds Methods of Successful Influence



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Methods of Successful Influence

How did I shift the beliefs of a woman with a death wish into one so excited about living she took up salsa lessons? How did I persuade a man who had been carrying the burden of guilt for over 40 years that it was time to forgive himself? How did I use the power of words to propel my coaching success to become the fastest promoted senior coach in the history of [one of the largest training companies in Singapore?](#)

In the **Secrets of Changing Minds** series I reveal step by step the key communication tips & strategies from [NLP](#) and indirect hypnosis you can use to change minds and transform beliefs.

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The Essential 4 Questions

4 Questions You Need To Know

These are the 4 basic questions that NLP discovered the patterns of master communicators hinge upon. These are the 4 questions that I fall back to whenever I need to start, when all else fails, when the shit hits the fan and I have no idea what to say next to make the difference between persuasion success or failure.

It's easy to talk about, but even better when you experience it for yourself; luckily you're going to get a chance right here

First, pick any goal you've set for yourself.

Secondly, run through each of these questions one by one, and as you take the time to answer each one, notice how differently you feel with each question.

- 1) What would happen if you achieved this goal?
- 2) What would happen if you didn't achieve this goal?
- 3) What wouldn't happen if you achieved this goal?
- 4) What wouldn't happen if you didn't achieve this goal?

Gone 'what duh?' yet? I know I often do at question 4

How did you feel? There's often a mind-expanding effect with this question...you begin to question things you didn't before, and you get new answers, an important step towards changing minds.

How The 4 Saved A Life

My favorite example of how powerful these 4 basic questions can be comes from Richard Bandler in one of the earliest NLP books; [Trance-Formations: Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the Structure of Hypnosis](#).

Richard meets an alcoholic old woman whom he gives a ride home to. On the way back, she complains and complains about all the ills and pains that being an alcoholic has given her...she admits to Richard that she's at the end of her rope and has no idea what to do.

Richard, just before he lets her off, turns to her with all earnestness, and tells her that she's been deceived, that all her life people have asked her the wrong question, that she's been asking herself the wrong question. The question isn't what would you do if you drank, he says, the question is what would you do if you didn't.

He tells her to ponder the answer to that question and call her the next day.

When he gets her phone call, she tells him that it was the most unexpected question anyone had ever asked her. For the first time she had a massive change of focus, and started to imagine all the possibilities of her life if she got rid of her drinking problem. She thanked Richard, because on the day before, seeing no future but a past of alcoholism, she had intended to end her own life before meeting him.

What Richard had done was to help change her mind, by asking her a different question; he got her to focus on a different outcome, one she had never imagined before.

While the application is an art, the technique itself is pretty simple. These are the 4 basic questions to changing minds:

- 1) What would happen if you did?
- 2) What would happen if you didn't?
- 3) What wouldn't happen if you did?
- 4) What wouldn't happen if you didn't?

What I Should Have Started With

What I Should Have Started With

Ok, I admit it; I held something back when I shared the [4 Essential Questions](#) with you. But I did it to make a point.

It was something I left out too at the start of my coaching career, but unintentionally, and it that contributed to me flopping much more at the beginning. When I got it, not only did my ability to influence soar, I began to notice it was a major reason beginning coaches struggled. It's a simple key, but often neglected.

So what was it I should have started with? The end. I should have started with the end.

Begin With The End In Mind

If you don't know what you're looking for, how would you know when you find it?

You can have the world's most powerful missile, but it'd still be useless if you couldn't fire it in the direction you want (especially not if it ends up coming right back at you!).

So the question to ask at the start is: **What is your intended outcome for this conversation?**

At the beginning of any attempt to change minds, you must know the end goal you have for the communication. Changing minds doesn't always happen in just one conversation though, so you can set both **long-term** (beyond the present conversation) and **short-term goals** (in this conversation).

How Do You Know When You've Already Succeeded?

When you aim that missile and fire away, you need a way to know whether or not it's hit its target.

At the same time, you need to know how you've succeeded at changing minds when you've already succeeded, so you don't keep firing missiles you don't need to.

The second question to ask yourself is: **What will you see, hear or feel differently when you've achieved your intended outcome?**

Will the other person breathe easier now that you're there? Sign the deal? Go out with you? Buy you lunch? Become vegetarian? Cheer up? Link to your blog (hint hint)?

The 2 Easy Questions You Need To Know Before You Start

To change minds successfully, begin with the end in mind. The 2 questions to do that are:

- 1) What is your intended outcome for this conversation?**

- 2) What will you see, hear or feel differently when you've achieved your intended outcome?**

What's Your Story?

He Couldn't Persuade Anyone for Anything

There once was a young car salesman, who could never make his quota. He could never quite figure out why it was some people made selling look like clients were begging to buy, while others like him couldn't seem to sell his way out of a wet paper bag.

Flustered, and at the end of his rope, he decided **he had enough** and that **things must change**. Through a series of introductions, he approached the most successful car salesperson in the country to ask her for the secret behind her success.

The Top Saleswoman In All The Land Reveals One And Only One Secret

She looked at him with a tiger's stare, but was he mistaken? He thought he saw a playful gleam behind that frightful look. She paused for what seemed like eternity after his outrageous question, but eventually, she spoke:

I was like you once. They used to call me hopeless; forget about selling ice to the eskimos, they used to say, **she couldn't sell water to a dying crowd in the Sahara!**

I thought to myself: maybe the ability to persuade someone was like blue eyes, you either had it or you didn't. I was so dejected; I quit my job and went to stay with my grandparents back in my home country.

What I didn't know I'd find was what changed my life.

One day, as I was feeling blue, my grandfather came and spoke to me. With a twinkle in his eye, he said:

There once was a man who, everyday of his life went out into the mountains, and planted acorn seeds. When he was asked why he did this, he said it was because he wished to see the mountains full again of the beautiful trees he used to enjoy in his childhood.

When they heard this, they all scoffed at him. Yet at the end of his life, he left behind a forest full of trees.

I'm telling you this because...well, I'm sure your parents never told you, but the people here used to call my words 'The Nectar of Heaven',

because I could lead the most stubborn horse to water *and* make him drink. But I never told anyone how. Now I am an old man, and who better to pass on the secrets behind my success than to my granddaughter?

In case you haven't noticed, my dear, **telling a story is a wonderful and unsuspecting way to sell someone your point**, especially if it's someone who's being as stubborn as a mule. Why?

1) Stories, told well, get your feelings *and* your reason. I suppose in your science they'd say a story speaks to both the left and right sides of the brain, to the conscious and unconscious minds. Why, hypnotists have been using stories for years! Just go to the greatest hypnotist of all, the movie theatre, and you'll see what I mean.

2) Stories are non-confrontational. I'm not making a point; I'm just telling you a story. Wouldn't you have been peeved if I had started a feel good speech on you just now?

3) People will form their own conclusions from a story. Instead of you telling them how it is directly, when you share a story people think they told themselves how it is (and they'd believe themselves more than they believe you). I never told you once to persevere, did I? You came up with that yourself after hearing the acorn story...didn't you (*mischievous wink*)?

4) Tell them a story like themselves, and they'll love to listen. Especially if the story has a problem like theirs, and a heroine that overcomes it...acorn seeds, my dear? And of course, the solution doesn't have to be exactly what you're selling (*wink wink*).

And with that, she asked the car salesman to leave. He went home in a daze, with the strangest of feelings, as if someone had taken him out of his body to another time and place, and now that he was back he wasn't quite sure where, what or whom he was.

Nevertheless, he felt like someone had just given him a big pot of gold, **he was confident he had just learnt something wonderful, even if he couldn't quite put his finger on it yet.** But he was quite sure he would dream about it that night, and every confusion would clear up in that dream, and come morning he would wake up a different man and **things would change for the better.**

And as his head hit the pillow, he did.

Shifting Depression Into Strength

How Do You Turn A Depressed Person Around?

Its 1:06am, I just got off from the phone with a friend, and boy am I glad I had my coaching skills with me! You see, my friend was facing a tough challenge, and you can guess he wasn't in a very good state. So **how do you shift someone from feeling depressed into feeling strong?**

3 Mind-Transforming Beliefs For Strength

There are many solutions, but here's one I've found that's worked, whether you're using it on someone or on yourself. But first, you need to know 3 simple beliefs.

1) **People are never depressed all the time.** Despite anyone's best attempts to say otherwise, no-one is always depressed. It might be when they're brushing their teeth, reading the papers, or driving the car, it's *impossible* to be depressed *all* the time. *They* might believe it, but *you* don't have to. The secret is to make them notice those times.

2) **People already have all the resources they need or they can get them.** Every one of us is resourceful to a certain extent, otherwise we'd be dead by now (hey, it's a tough world!). Every one of us also has at least one moment in time where we've shined in some way. The secret is, again, **in noticing and remembering those times.**

3) **Good states create good decisions.** The quality of your thinking and decisions are tied in to how good you're feeling. If you're feeling strong and centered, you'll make better decisions compared to if you're feeling depressed and tired.

Focus On Resources

Someone who's depressed doesn't remember all the times she kicked ass in her life. In depression, the focus has been shifted to the negative; what went wrong, what is wrong and what will go wrong.

So the key is to **shift them into noticing what went right, what is right and what will go right.**

And one way to do that is to ask positively focused leading questions, to **draw out this focus**, like;

- 1) I know it might be a bit hard to think about right now, **but if there were to be a useful lesson in all this**, what do you think it might be?
- 2) Sounds like you had a rough day! I'm curious though, I'm sure **there must have been at least *one* good thing that happened today**. What do you think that might be?
- 3) I know you've been through tough times before. **What was it you did then that helped you overcome them?**
- 4) What do you think, that having been through this, will make you **stronger in times to come?**

When Focusing On Resources Won't Work & Why

If you've ever attempted to cheer someone down in the dumps, you'd have faced times when it doesn't work. There are generally 2 reasons why this happens:

1) **Not enough empathy.** **Resistance is a sign of lack of rapport.** People, especially in a down state, feel like **they need to be understood first before they want to understand**. If they don't feel like you get them, they're not going to listen (**Empathy Before Solutions Part 3** has 9 strategies to build empathic rapport).

2) **Giving more solutions instead drawing them out.** Ever had advice given to you...which you eventually ignored anyway? The key is that people are more open to their own thoughts than the thoughts of others. The beauty of asking leading and empowering questions is three-fold:

- i) by having them come up with their own solutions, **there is much less resistance** than if you presented solutions to them,
- ii) being able to come up with their own solutions helps them build a **stronger sense of personal power**,
- iii) **you believing that they are resourceful enough** to find their own solutions, and demonstrating that belief by asking instead of telling them, helps them believe it too.

What's The Next Action On Empowerment?

After you've gotten yourself or someone else to shift their focus, you'll notice that they start feeling and thinking differently. This positive state is a much better one to start discussing solutions than a negative one. **This is now the best time to start talking next actions**, although you

might be surprised that they might already have thought of a solution by themselves.

Giving Hypnotic Commands

What Is Hypnosis?

Wow. Hypnosis. Is it some Force-like mystic power that grants you dominance and power over hapless bankers and nubile virgins? Unfortunately, the truth isn't as glamorous (or as nubile). Trance is a lot more common than you think...in fact; **you're in a trance right now.**

Hypnosis can be defined as an intense state of concentration towards a singular focus, so much so that external stimuli can be blocked out. The fact is, **you've been in many trances before.** Becoming totally immersed into a movie, so much so that you feel, worry for and even cry over those characters as if they're real, is a trance. Not seeing the keys that you've lost on the shelf right in front of you is also a trance...after all, you just hallucinated that something that is there, isn't!

Even reading a self-improvement blog, to the extend of not noticing how the bottom of your soles are feeling right now, is also a light trance

The Biggest Myth About Hypnosis

Is that you can be hypnotized into doing something against your will. The father of modern hypnotherapy, **Milton Erickson** (who was one of the leading models for **NLP**), did his own research starting in 1932, lasting a period of four to six years in which he hypnotized subjects from upwards of 300 to 500 times.

He found that you *could not* hypnotize someone against their moral will, and that you *could not* hypnotize someone to do something they knew would harm them. In fact, some of them became downright uncooperative when asked to do so!

But Alvin, what about those TV shows where **they make you cluck like a chicken and quack like a duck?**

What you may not know about these shows is that the hypnotists have to do suggestibility tests; only those who are willing to let themselves go and follow the hypnotic suggestions are selected to go on, and often enough, these folk are usually extroverted, enjoy performing and also know that they're perfectly safe (last I checked, quacking like a duck is quite safe...*quack*).

Why Use Hypnotic Commands To Change Minds?

I come from the indirect school of hypnosis. The direct schools are those you see in the movies, where the hypnotist goes 'go in a trance now!' and things get all swirly and gooey.

The indirect school of hypnosis is a tad more elegant, and would say something like 'I wonder if you would go into a trance now or later?' instead.

What's wonderful about the art and skill of giving indirect commands is that **they work great on resistant people**. In hypnosis, the general rule of thumb is that the more resistant the person, the more an indirect approach works.

So How Do You Give Hypnotic Commands?

Hypnosis is an art, and just like any art form, has its levels; from the simple but wonderful crayon drawings of a child, to the masterpiece of a Monet. It also serves many different uses, from the decoration of a flower arrangement to the functionality of a Ferrari.

While there are many different ways of inducing trance and giving hypnotic commands, here are **3 quick and easy ways** using the technique known as **an embedded command**; a hypnotic command hidden in an otherwise innocent sounding sentence.

1) **Using your tone of voice**. Imagine hearing this sentence: 'this discount is good for only 1 more day (spoken in your normal tone of voice), **it sounds like a good deal** (spoken in a deeper tone), doesn't it?'

2) **Using pauses**. 'Talking about it this way...**you, like me**...can imagine just how this can work.'

3) **Using gestures**. 'And just by getting a sense of this, (start nodding head) **you can really begin to understand how this works** (stop nodding head), and feel how much hypnosis can help you kick ass'.

There are 2 simple reasons why this works;

i) **these are things that people already do...unconsciously**. So you're using previously unconscious language consciously, to fully use all of your communication prowess and supercharge your message.

After all, **words are only 7% of your communication**, so you really need to learn how to direct the other 93% so you send out a powerful and congruent message...right (shaking head left to right)?

ii) hypnosis works on your unconscious mind, and even though you might not pick up on the emphasis on these words consciously, **your unconscious mind** does.

But What If You Get Caught Hypnotizing Someone?

When I first started doing this, not just in coaching sessions but in everyday life, I was dead worried that I'd get called out for speaking funny.

They'd be all like, 'hey, why're you speaking like that...why did you emphasize those words "you like me" ...are you trying to hypnotize me? Why, you sneaky little-!'

But you know what? *That never happened.*

I found out a pretty significant truth: except for those with a heightened sense of awareness (who are in the minority), most people care more about what they say than what you say.

At least, I *hope* that's a truth, and it's not just me (*shucks*).

Give Everyone You Know A Hypnotic Command...Today!

Does it sound a little difficult to start? After all, you have to watch your tone of voice, when you pause when talking, and how you gesture. Who does that?

Trust me, when I started out, it felt like a lot too. But I started by just picking *one* thing I'd work on that day, like varying my tonality, practicing and experimenting with it to see how and what works. And slowly but surely, I became better and better at it.

So, why not you? Gain the power of changing minds by giving hypnotic commands...today

They're From A Different World

The People You Love Are From Another Planet

I hate to be the one to break this to you but, you know the people you love whom you think are speaking the same language as you are? *They're actually alien invaders from another planet!*

:P

Ok, so...*maybe* they aren't alien invaders. But they might as well be speaking an alien language, and sometimes it's even better to treat them that way. Why?

Think of a chair. Really, think of one. Did you think of the one I was? I was imagining the red, slightly worn one on wheels in my room. Fair bet it wasn't the same. What about an apple? Red or green? Orange? The fruit or the color?

Ok, maybe specific objects would be a tough stretch. But it gets even *stretchier* when we start moving on to abstract ideas...love anyone? You think we're thinking of the same thing? *Really?* Justice? Responsibility? Respect? Courage? Compassion?

We think it's obvious that when we speak, we're thinking of the same exact thing, and oftentimes, that's when misunderstandings happen. And if you don't understand what people mean, you don't have a chance of changing their minds.

How To Really Understand Your Best Friends

We all know that [everyone has a different map of the world](#); we all see the world differently and believe different things about life.

So the real question is; **how do we navigate other people's territories so that they become part of our maps?**

Well, the answer is simple really, **just ask.**

Yup, just ask. Sorry for the lack of NLP/hypnosis fireworks.

But how many of us really do?

And more specifically, what do we ask for?

This is where **NLP** (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) helps loads. You ask for what NLP calls an evidence procedure, things that you can see, hear, and touch.

How To Make Your Loved Ones Feel Loved The Way They Want To

For example, love is such an abstract word. Yet we all want to feel loved, don't we? And isn't it also true, that we all have different ideas of what feeling loved really means?

Ever had the experience of quarreling with a loved one, because you thought what you did was loving while she/he didn't? I know I have.

So what you'd want to find out is how she knows that she's loved, *the way she believes it's loving*, not the way *you* think it is. There are 3 ways you can ask:

1) **How do you know when you're being loved?** What do you see, hear or feel? Is it when someone brings you to see new sights? When she says in that special tone that she loves you? Or when he holds you close?

2) **How do you know when someone is being loving?** How do you know when someone is being loving to you? When he or she is doing what?

3) **What must happen in order for you to feel loved?** What *must* happen, not what you'd like to happen, that makes you feel loved? Must needs come before wants, and these are the first rules you must know to understand their definition of love. Must someone see you at least twice a week? Call you everyday? Give you surprises every once in a while?

You want to turn the noun 'love' (an inactive thing) into an action (loving), and therefore something that can be seen, heard and felt.

Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood

If you don't know what someone means by 'love', it's going to be hard to make that person feel loved in the long run by assumption. It's the same for all the abstract ideas we have, of satisfaction, friendship, respect, responsibility and so on.

If you don't know what someone means when she says 'happiness', you won't be able to deliver, and only after **understanding someone's model of the world** can you have a chance to change their minds.

Travel Through Time

Become A Time Traveller

Changing someone's mind doesn't just mean changing their *perspectives*; it can also mean changing the way they think through *time*.

People can be stuck in a way of thinking not just from a perspective, but also from a fixed focus on either the past, present or future. A sneaky way you can change someone's mind is to use your language to change *when* they're focusing on as well as *what*.

Look Back From The Future, What Do You See?

To get people to change their state from feeling stressed over a present problem into a positive focus on solutions, I'd ask something like this;

"Imagine tomorrow that *you've already resolved* this problem successfully. How would things look, feel and sound *differently?*"

You bring them forward in time and get them to look back at now as if it's the past, and ask them what's *different*.

How Have You Already Achieved This Goal?

If I needed to help them find steps towards a desired outcome to which they have no idea how to get to, I'd ask;

"So imagine in the future *already having achieved* this goal, looking *back at now*, what were the steps *you took* that helped you get there?"

So instead of looking from the present to the future and planning how to get there, we focus on the successful future already accomplished, look back to the present and plan backwards.

How Would You Know When You've Already Made This Change?

The 2 questions above work when the other person already knows what she wants. But what happen when she doesn't? That's where [the miracle question](#) from [Solutions Focused Brief Therapy](#) works very well:

"Imagine that tomorrow somehow, in some way, this whole problem *has been overcome*. How would you know that things are different? What would you see, hear or feel?"

How You've Been Sold With This Technique

This technique is often used in sales. Someone might say;

"I know it looks expensive *now*, but *after* you've *used* it for years and saved all the maintenance costs you would have paid with the other machines, you'll realize it *was* a fantastic deal."

The 3 Keys To Changing Minds Through The Future

Confused? You might already have noticed the 3 keys to shifting time as a way to change someone's mind.

1) Talking about the present in the past tense. Looking back from the future at now, so that what you've learnt reading here adds to your magic bag of mind-changing tricks.

2) Presupposing a more positive future. If you're going to make a future, might as well make a good one. You use the trick of going into the future to presuppose a positive one in which problems have been solved and outcomes achieved, and look back at the more problematic present to see how you got there.

By the way, pessimists are great at this technique, only they often create a worse future to look back from!

3) Noticing what's different. The core question is to notice what's different about having a positive future experience compared to a negative present one, so you have the keys to knowing what needs to be changed and what a good change would look like.

In actual fact, no-one really travels to the future, but by using this trick of orientating them to a better future they can experience now instead of a present in which they're stuck, they activate the wealth of positive states and [resources which they already have](#).

Still confused? Well, confusion is the first step towards new learnings. Leave a comment with your questions so you won't be confused after.

The Most Important Key

What To Do When All My Smarty-Pants NLP Tricks Failed

It's what you must have from the start and it's what pulls you through until the end. It's the simplest key and also the hardest of all. **The most important key to changing someone's mind is just to care.**

Not as sexy as [giving hypnotic commands](#), but true.

I rose fast through the ranks of the [AkItg](#) coaches, becoming the faster coach ever to be ranked senior coach in the [Patterns of Excellence](#) programs. I was a little snotty as I became an [NLP](#) elite; I knew more about NLP than most of the coaches and I knew it.

But being the snotty NLP encyclopedia I noticed coaches that didn't have my gigantic (awe-inspiring really) arsenal of NLP tricks up their sleeves...who still got wonderful results with their participants. What was going on?

I wondered over that for a while, until I gradually came to understand it: *those coaches cared*. **And that caring, more than any coaching technique, was the key ingredient in helping their participants make changes happen.**

People are smarter than we give them credit for. We may not always notice it but there's an inner intuition that lets you know when someone is 'right' or when someone is 'wrong', you know when someone is acting with your interests at heart or not.

In all my experiences of coaching children, teenagers and adults it's always been the same: **if you can't come from a position of caring you can't affect change**. If someone senses you're coming for *you* more than for *them*, they're going to switch off.

When you want to change someone's mind, change it for them, not just for you. You'll feel better for it, and you'll succeed more often.

If You Liked Secrets Of Changing Minds...

It's only the tip of the iceberg. You can find hundreds of strategies on how to lead an effective life - free - on lifecoachesblog.com

What Some People Are Saying About [Life Coaches Blog](#)

[Gleb Reys](#) Says:

Your blog is very informational and it's one of rare places on the web where people trust your expertise, share your views and follow you closely, be it an article of yours or a link to some other useful resource.

Thanks!

[Mike Papageorge](#) Says:

Funny that you make this post. This morning, as I fire up my PDA and hit bloglines, I get all excited to see two new posts from LCB, and realize that its one of the few that I read at the moment that I find exciting...

Anyways, I've always been into coaching, quite like the way you write and seem to identify with much of it at the moment. I wish the NLP stuff came out a bit faster though

Great work, I like the NLP stuff the most at the moment, but I quite like the writing style here. Informal yet authoratative, and that, besides content tha I am interested in, is what makes this site work very well, imo.

[Matthew Cornell](#) Says:

I enjoy the personal development ideas, and the exposure to areas like NLP that I know nothing about. Plus, just good, interesting writing!

[Jacky Chua](#) Says:

As far as I can remember, I never fail to get some form of inspiration from your articles...keep it up man!

Who Is Alvin Soon?



I've been a developer, innovator, author, coach, and consultant in the field of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and life coaching since 2005. I write and share the many tips, tools and techniques I've found to improve others' lives and my own on lifecoachesblog.com

If You Want Even More Methods Of Successful Influence...

Can you imagine having even more power and choice over whom and how you influence the people you want? These are the breakthrough books you've been waiting for.

Sleight of Mouth: The Magic of Conversational Belief Change

How to easily melt resistance and change the minds of anyone you meet, without worrying about what to say.

Robert Dilts, co-developer of [Neuro-Linguistic Programming](#), shows you exactly how to use the communication patterns of master communicators to rapidly influence, persuade, and sell to anyone you talk to.

This is cutting-edge, advanced NLP technology that you won't believe is being given away in this deceptively simple book!

Order [Sleight of Mouth: The Magic of Conversational Belief Change](#) from Amazon today.

Phoenix: Therapeutic Patterns of Milton H. Erickson

The amazing change secrets of the father of modern hypnotherapy, Milton H. Erickson!

How did a half-paralyzed, color-blind man create change with clients that every other psychiatrist had given up as hopeless? And what would you give to have that level of leverage and influence?

I know it sounds impossible, but you'll learn Erickson's power-packed secrets in this easy-to-understand book, techniques that *you won't find anywhere else*.

P.S. This book is my life coaching *bible*.

Order [Phoenix: Therapeutic Patterns of Milton H. Erickson](#) from Amazon today.