

NLP Certification and Training

NLP Training is an unregulated field. There is no single awarding body or professional institute. Hence you can find a wide variation between programmes on offer from different training companies. There are also some common principles.

Certification

There are 4 levels of certification widely recognised in the NLP community. These are Practitioner, Master Practitioner, Trainer and Master Trainer. You have to achieve each level before progressing to the next. Practitioner and Master Practitioner qualifications are awarded by Trainers; only a Master Trainer can accredit new Trainers.

The main awarding bodies in NLP are:

- Society of NLP
- American Board of NLP (ABNLP)/British Board of NLP (BBNLP)
- International NLP Trainers Association (INLPTA)

Training

The NLP programmes you will see most NLP Training companies offering are Practitioner and Master Practitioner. Since these are often a big commitment of time and money, most trainers also offer an introductory level programme so that you can attend one or two days and find out if you want to go on to Practitioner training and if that trainer's style suits your preferences.

Courses can vary significantly and two Practitioners of NLP who trained with different Trainers might have a very different set of skills. Some training companies regard a Practitioner of NLP to be someone who practices NLP in their daily life and uses it to enhance their professional expertise - this is probably what you should be looking for if you want to learn NLP to become a more successful leader. Other training companies approach NLP Practitioner training as a step towards setting up a 'practice' and using it as a therapist or coach with others one-to-one – useful if you want to do that, and for alternative therapists and so on, but not the obvious route for business leaders.

There is a reasonable amount of agreement about the syllabus for NLP Practitioner training, so you can expect some of the same ground to be covered whoever is conducting the training. What will differ is the depth in which each topic is covered and the examples and exercises

used. Some training companies offer a business-oriented programme and this will often be labelled as 'NLP Business Practitioner' training.

The potential downside to this is that the 'Business Practitioner' training will still focus on the techniques for personal change and cover the same material as any other Practitioner programme. If you're looking for a course for business applications, make sure it's being offered by a trainer with relevant experience of business.

A lot of people who learn NLP do so entirely for the personal development experience. If you attend a 'general' course you may find yourself learning with people who are dealing with a mid-life crisis, handling emotional baggage from childhood or trying to improve their romantic relationships. You have been warned!

'Accelerated' Training

One major difference between courses is their length. When NLP was first introduced in the UK in the early 1980's the standard for a Practitioner training programme was 20 days in total. During the 1990's some training companies introduced a style of programme they called 'accelerated training', which is usually about 7 days in total. At first sight this is very appealing to busy people; however, the reality is that the 7 days is the total time spent in the training room. Before you get there, you have to listen to an audio recording of the material at least twice, read several books and complete a written test. This works very well for some individuals – it depends on your preferred learning style – and has the advantage of flexibility. The downside is that some people are too busy to do the preparation and this can seriously detract from the effectiveness of the group sessions.

Other training providers offer a practitioner programme that is around 7 days in total without any pre-course learning. This simply goes to show that the notion of 'Practitioner training' varies widely. In general it's fair to say that the shorter the course, the less you'll learn. Remember that NLP is a set of practical skills that need to be practiced to embed them at the unconscious level. Without that practice, you can come to the end of the course with no new skills, just a lot of new information.

Do I really need to attend a Practitioner training?

This is a good question. The important thing to bear in mind is that NLP is a set of practical skills. That makes it difficult to learn from books. Imagine you wanted to learn to play a new sport or a musical instrument. Understanding the theory is one thing, but if you want to be able to do it well, you need to practice. NLP is similar, it's not about knowledge, it's about skill and it's easiest for most people to learn from someone who already has the skills.

Even a 1-day course will bring some of the basics to life for most learners. That will make the books more accessible and if you have someone to practice with then you can probably achieve quite a bit without actually attending any more training.

The question then, is – do you want a certificate? Currently, you have to attend a course in order to get accreditation.

Reasons to take a Practitioner programme

- To get the certificate
- To increase your network
- To get lots of practice and coaching from a Trainer of NLP

Reasons to learn without attending a Practitioner programme

- If you don't want/need the certificate
- If you like to direct your own learning totally
- If you have someone you can practice with

The Brilliant Minds Executive NLP Practitioner programme

I ran my first 20-day Practitioner programme in 1997 and it's always been a business-oriented programme because that's what I know about. I do have a degree in Psychology and I'm an experienced coach but I'm NOT a therapist, so I tend not to train people to do therapy or target the programme at people exclusively wanting personal development.

In 2010 I stopped running the Practitioner programme in favour of a condensed 4-day programme, on the basis that it would be more practical for business leaders. In 2012 I decided that there really is no substitute for a 'proper' Practitioner programme and on the basis that I want to deliver the best learning I can for my clients, I've reinstated the 20-day programme. Sometimes there really isn't a shortcut to success.