



THE ACTION  
FACTORY  
PODCAST

Session 9 | 2024

# Neurolinguistic programming in residential youth work.

Welcome to the podcast audio training course. Each session is designed to be commutable sized lessons that can be absorbed on the bus and practiced at work.

Available for free by subscribing to the podcast at [www.theactionfactory.com](http://www.theactionfactory.com)



Presented by Michael Dawson

[www.theactionfactory.com](http://www.theactionfactory.com)



# Substance Abuse

In a residential care environment you will have come across the full substance abuse menu. A perfect storm of peer pressure, teenagers and the effects of abuse on young people. These factors can all play a part in how young people are not only introduced to substances like tobacco and alcohol but how they can become a piece of the young peoples adult lives.

The substances can offer a means of escape from the situation our clients find themselves in, this becoming a crutch that never goes away. Then theres the teenage desire to experiment as I expect we all did at some stage.

What NLP tells us.

# WHY WE DO IT

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) provides insights into risky behaviors, emphasizing the role of thoughts, emotions, and communication patterns in driving such behaviors. Here are key aspects of what NLP says about risky behavior and why we engage in it:

NLP cites the same factors that create any behavior:

- Limiting beliefs and a feeling of powerlessness.
- Submodalities, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, gustatory, and olfactory senses.
- Anchoring: Risky behaviors can become anchored to certain triggers or situations.
- Communication Patterns: Negative self-talk and internal dialogue can contribute to risky behaviors.
- Values and Motivations: Many risky behaviors are driven by an underlying need or value.

In essence, NLP views risky behaviors as patterns rooted in an individual's internal representations, beliefs, and thought processes.

[www.theactionfactory.com](http://www.theactionfactory.com)



What NLP doesn't tell us.

# Limitations of NLP

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) demands consistent practice for its effective use, a requirement that often isn't feasible in residential youth work. I propose extracting the essential and easily applicable elements of NLP and incorporating them into the skill set of residential youth workers.

My concept of the problem paramedic is helpful. A paramedic's primary responsibility is not to fully cure or rehabilitate a patient, but rather to stabilize them and transport them safely to a medical facility. Similarly, the role of a residential youth worker is not to completely resolve the issues faced by the youth but to provide support and care to maintain their well-being within the scope of their professional capacity.

Much like paramedics, residential youth workers might not see the long-term results of their efforts. Their role is crucial but inherently limited in terms of influencing the complete recovery or developmental trajectory of the youth in their care. Thus, the focus should be on making a positive, immediate impact with the tools and resources available, akin to the first-response approach of paramedics.

[www.theactionfactory.com](http://www.theactionfactory.com)



# THE MOTIVATED

T H O S E   S E E K I N G   H E L P



## 1. SUBMODALITIES

Chatting about a vivid memory of a positive, drug-free experience, such as a moment of joy or accomplishment. Then, have them associate this memory with the submodalities (e.g., bright and colorful mental images, clear and resonant internal dialogue) of their drug use experiences.



## 2. CORE VALUES

Identify their core values. Explore how drug use aligns or conflicts with these values. Facilitate a conversation where they can see that quitting substances is more congruent with their values (e.g., health, personal growth, family) than continued drug use.



## 3. TIMELINE THERAPY

Could we adapt this? Encourage the teenager to visualize their drug-free future regularly? Talk and use language as if its already happened?  
Help them set smaller, achievable goals on their timeline, reinforcing their progress toward a substance-free life?

# THE UNMOTIVATED

T H O S E   N O T   S E E K I N G   H E L P



## 1. META MODEL QUESTIONING

Ask questions like "What specifically makes you believe drugs are the only solution?" or "How do you know for sure that you can't change your situation?" These questions encourage them to explore their thought processes and potentially identify opportunities for positive change.



## 2. REFRAMING LANGUAGE

When discussing drug use, use subtle reframing techniques. For example, instead of saying, "Drugs help you escape from problems," you might say, "People sometimes find it valuable to explore healthier ways to manage stress or emotions."



## 3. FUTURE PACING

Ask questions like "What would your life look like in a year if you were drug-free?" Emphasize the positive aspects of their drug-free life, highlighting how it aligns with their aspirations. Encourage them to take small steps toward this vision, building motivation gradually.